Measuringand Managing 'fragile states'
Quantification and power

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MEASURING AND MANAGING 'FRAGILE STATES': QUANTIFICATION AND POWER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the practices that classify 'fragile states' and their impacts. I analyse not only direct practices of ranking and categorisation but many indirect practices that make of 'state fragility' a measurable and manageable political truth. This research looks at the relations between the World Bank, OECD and the g7+ group of self-labelled 'fragile states' to understand how this measurable and manageable political truth is constructed, what power this construction involves and what its implications are. 'State fragility' has been largely quantified in systems used to compare state performance. Drawing from Bourdieu's sociology and Hacking's philosophy, I suggest these practices of quantification and classification are not a mere technicality; they answer to deep-seated successes of statistical reasoning, and their political entrenchment in policy-making has particular impacts in the 'fragile states' agenda. I suggest quantifying and classifying practices constitute a style of thinking and doing that carries symbolic power, a subtle but no less important form of power. Symbolic power is diffuse, and through the subtlety of practical sense it wins the complicity of those who seem least favoured by it – as crucially and richly exemplified by the self-labelling and self-measurement of the g7+ in terms of 'state fragility'. However, in the diffuse and hardly traceable form of statistics, it also carries the elements that allow its own weakening and change. While direct power hardly leaves arms unattended, quantification by necessity travels with its tools and practices, hence, making it more possible to catch hold of some of these elements. I argue that by ignoring the practical sense in quantification and classification and by taking for granted what power is in these dynamics, how it is exerted and by whom, many critics paradoxically side-line the very subtle but important possibilities for weakening and change this symbolic power carries within.

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ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy (World Bank)
CCSD	Center for Conflict, Security and Development (World Bank)
CEP	Community Empowerment Project (World Bank in Timor-Leste)
C/FACTS	Conflict and Fragility Alert, Consultation and Tracking System (USAID)
CSO	US Conflict and Stabilization Operations
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (World Bank)
CPR	Country Performance Rating (World Bank)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCD	Development Co-operation Directorate (OECD)
DfID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FSG	Fragile States Group (OECD)
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
IDA	International Development Assistance (World Bank)
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group (World Bank)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility (OECD)
IRAI	IDA Resource Allocation Index (World Bank)
ISN	Interim Strategy Note (World Bank)
LICUS	Low Income Countries Under Stress (World Bank)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MfDR	Management for Development Results
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDAE	Timor-Leste's National Directorate for Aid Effectiveness
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	World Bank's Operational Policy
OPCS	Operations Policy and Country Services (World Bank)
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century
PBA	Performance-Based Allocation (World Bank)
PCPI	Post-Conflict Performance Indicators
PRP	Portfolio Performance Rating (World Bank)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PSGs	New Deal's Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals
S/CRS	former Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (US)
START	Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (Canada)
TFET	Trust Fund for East Timor
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNTAET	UN Transitional Administration in East Timor
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WBG	World Bank Group
WBI	World Bank Institute
WDI	World Development Indicators (World Bank)
WDR	World Development Report (World Bank)

INTRODUCTION

NAMES, NUMBERS, PRACTICES AND POWER

> People in fragile and conflict-affected states are more than twice as likely to be undernourished as those in *other developing countries*, more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school, twice as likely to see their children die before age five….[1]

Reports on 'state fragility' frequently convey as much human misery as possible in only a few lines, always punctuated by numbers and comparisons. Practitioners count on the ability to create visualisation to provoke action. It is believed that with the help of quantification the many problems of 'fragile states' can be easily viewed and interpreted by policy-makers, speeding decision-making and aid allocation. If 'fragile states' are different from '*other developing countries*', the reasoning goes, more research needs to be done to understand what differences these are. Moreover, these peculiarities need to be properly measured, studied and aggregated in order to provide a proper analytical frame for action, and any remedies need to be tailored to these measured realities.[2] All 'twice', 'three times' and other comparisons seen as useful are constantly scrutinised and reworked. It follows that the urge to quantify and classify 'fragile states' encourage the development of new departments, measuring tools, procedures and expertise, besides an ironically unquantifiable number of reports and databases.

[1] World Bank 2011b, p. 5. My emphasis.
[2] For examples, see Department for International Development (DFID) January 2005; World Bank 2010; OECD 2011.

In this thesis, I suggest it is ultimately these direct and indirect bureaucratic practices of classification, such as measuring, monitoring, advising and evaluation, with all their possibilities and limitations that guide the management of 'fragile states at a distance. These practices are, therefore, the object of this research.

1. POINTS OF DEPARTURE

In universities and think tanks, mainstream academics, just as practitioners, are parties in the quest for numerical comparisons. They seek to constantly improve data and classification[3] and to increase the 'efficiency' of programmes delivered to 'fragile states.[4] Successful programmes are showcased, and examples are offered of solutions that did not work as they should. If children are three times less likely to attend school in a certain 'fragile state', mainstream academics – or remote practitioners – will look at the country's history, analyse statistics, talk to experts, and find the numbers that might show what specific actions hinder or promote development in the education sector in the country they study. These approaches commonly criticise generalisations in policy (not necessarily in theory) and argue for contextualisation and tailored solutions.[5] The said focus on details in many cases concludes with the proposition of a new classification of 'state fragility' and/or a new 'fragility' spectrum (populated by generalised theoretical categories).[6]

In another corner of academia, critical scholars do not deny the concrete human misery in 'fragile states' or the need to help; in fact, this is not problematised *per se*. These scholars channel their shock and unconformity instead towards the very framing of the problem, the labelling of postcolonial countries as 'fragile' or other labels deemed to be similar. These scholars criticise what they see as the imposition of development standards based on Western concepts of statehood and legitimacy, and condemn the lack of historical contextualisation around how countries

[3] Call 2010; Carment and Samy 15 June 2012; Grävingholt, Ziaja et al. 2012
[4] Rotberg 2004b; Call and Wyeth 2008; Haims, Gombert et al. 2008.
[5] For an example of contextualisation, see Roque February 2006.
[6] For a known example of a spectrum, see Gros 1996.

became 'fragile'.[7] Consequently, another approach to postcolonial countries is generally advocated, one to be framed by a new power-knowledge relationship. Essentially, these scholars defend that any labels that depict postcolonial countries as 'the imperfect representation' of Western countries should be dismissed.[8]

In this thesis, I address these two approaches to 'state fragility' – henceforth, 'problem-solving' and 'politically sceptical' respectively – by acknowledging a few basic points of departure: There is no denying the human situation in so-called fragile states demands action, some kind of response; it is also acknowledged that many numbers are useful in making sense of the problems in these countries. However, it is important to notice that the classification of 'fragile states', their labelling and measuring come at a cost, with powerful political and economic effects for 'fragile states', whose ranking by Western institutions might determine aid allocation and development priorities. Nevertheless, I also part ways significantly with many components of these arguments.

I take here a path other than problem-solving or political scepticism, one focused on analysing the specific practices that classify 'state fragility'. First, I take distance from a homogenous and collective 'West', as much as I do not see 'fragile states' as one and only oppressed, passive 'Other'. Second, this research does not offer an epistemologically privileged view of actors' *interior plans and intentions* in classifying 'state fragility'. Finally, and very importantly, I believe that although some measuring is welcome to make sense of the issues afflicting so-called fragile states, the endless reworking of the numerical bureaucracy around the topic has achieved peaks of senseless quantification. A tantalising challenge of ever improved (and never perfect) numbers is bound to leave aside, in a systematic way, that which cannot be grasped by statistics. This research suggests one does not need to dive in an ocean of intentions to make sense of these issues, and moreover, that by seeking to do so, one might leave aside both *how* these dynamics take place and *what changes* they might enable.

Indeed, this thesis does not look at why classification is done as it is, at least not in terms of assumed collective and homogenous intentions. I

[7] For a historical critique, see Grovogui 2002.
[8] See Bilgin and Morton 2002, 2004; Hill 2005; Hameiri 2007. For an empirical example of the critique, see Nguyen March 2005, 23 June 2006.

ask '*What practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?'*. I believe this question gives this research the potential to look at the impacts of measuring and labelling and, thus, at how power is exercised in the classification of 'state fragility' but without taking for granted *who* exerts it and *how* it can be exerted. In fact, these 'who' and 'how' are at the core of the research. This openness is fundamentally due to the possibility of looking at the many indirect and subtle practices that classify 'state fragility' on an everyday basis.

I suggest that turning attention to measuring, advising, monitoring and many practices besides direct rankings opens space to understanding how the label sustains itself and if any dismissal is possible, desired and/or practical and in which terms. An analysis of the measuring that contributes to the labelling is also able to show what role bureaucratic numbers play, what expertise is involved in their production, how actors negotiate these skills and, thus, what role such skills play in the relations of power involved in this classification. Hence, the question raised allows addressing the main points of departure mentioned without losing sight of the important contributions made by the problem-solving and the politically sceptical approaches. The politics that classify 'fragile states' is approached in this thesis as a dynamic of power, but a subtle one.

Some key theoretical guidelines direct my approach: The research analyses 'state fragility' as a political construction. However, it does not refute the concrete human misery the classification of 'fragile states' is seen to address or the fact that many countries called 'fragile' have this human misery in common. The research aims instead at understanding what ways of thinking and doing allow the common sense around 'fragile states' to take hold (despite many critiques to several of its elements) and at unpacking the impacts of such practices of labelling and measuring. This thesis, therefore, works with a specific idea of construction, one that does not problematise the *reality* of what numbers are supposed to represent as much as *what it takes* for them to represent anything and what they actually fail to show.[9]

[9] For a discussion on the many understandings of 'construction' in social sciences and the values and limitations of different approaches, see Hacking 1999. I will not classify my own approach according to the categories Hacking proposes, as this would be ironic, to say the least, in a research that looks at the impacts of classification. I do, however, allocate great

Therefore, by unpacking the impacts of measuring and classifying 'state fragility', I look at the power that donor agencies can exert through labelling but I suggest this is a form of *symbolic power* – a shared and co-authored form of power that links what some call 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' in a joint practical endeavour.[10] Crucially, the taking for granted of 'fragile states' as passive and oppressed victims does not take into account recent developments in international politics whereby so-called fragile states, members of the g7+ group, have taken to self-labelling and self-measurement in terms of 'state fragility'.[11] Moreover, the essentialisation of an oppressor-oppressed divide does not contribute to any empowerment critical scholars may advocate. Most critical proposals so far have circumscribed the question of what practical means make the label hold, thus being oblivious to both the dynamics that show some co-option of the labelled and the practical pressures that led to this self-labelling. I suggest those are precisely the issues that would turn the proposed dismissal of the label (and others deemed similar) a fruitless project.

2. POWER AND THE LABEL

What is peculiar about the most recent label of 'fragile states'? My decision to explore the practices that classify 'state fragility' is based on two main thoughts: that the label is fundamentally part of a history of labelling of postcolonial states, and that this labelling is not a 'tool' in a simple repetition of power relations. That means that 'fragile state' is indeed one more label applied initially by Western governments and agencies to postcolonial countries, a label also able to generate powerful political and economic impacts that should be analysed. However, if all labels are essentially the same, if they can be used interchangeably and have the same impacts, why would they change? Is there nothing specific in the context of the use and production of the 'fragile state' label? Are we really living, since colonial

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importance to his insight that '[a]nything worth calling a construction has a history. But not just any history. It has to be a history of building' (p. 50). As a history of building, this thesis looks at materials, people, techniques and tools.

[10] Bourdieu 1990a, pp. 133-7.

[11] This self-labelled group of 'fragile states' was officially founded in 2011 and, as of 2014, it is formed by 19 countries, most of those in Africa but also including Afghanistan, Yemen, Haiti and Timor-Leste, for instance. See g7+ 2014. Being it at the centre of this research, I look at the group in details ahead.

times, one relation of power, one form of domination, one history? Are so-called oppressors and oppressed the same characters in the unfolding of many decades and centuries of economic and political history?

Labels have frequently and quickly changed and the 'fragile state' label will probably soon also be substituted or modified. To look at the practices and impacts of the 'fragile state' classification is to acknowledge the impacts of such label, but also to question the one power, one history narrative of certain accounts, by looking at the specific context in which the label is produced and reproduced.[12] By having as background inspiration both questions of 'what does the fragile state label make possible?' and 'what makes the fragile state label possible?', this research contributes a snapshot in the history of postcolonial labels (and only that). Nevertheless, this snapshot seeks to show the importance of enquiries that leave space for change by turning power into a question, rather than an empty, a-temporal answer.

This thesis focuses on where classification takes place, the territory of bureaucracy, techniques, skills and expertise, where changes are currently produced and felt, even if subtly. The hypotheses explored in this research will be further elaborated ahead, but the main suggestions are that

a) the practices that classify 'state fragility' are embedded in a deep-seated *style of thinking and doing* based on a measurement-for-management rationale that has old roots in statistical reasoning. Thus, looking at such practices opens space to escape homogenised collective intentions by illustrating the practicality, that is, the *practical sense* in this reasoning, reflecting how entrenched these practices are and the fruitlessness of suggestions that the label be simply dismissed;

b) the bureaucratic practices of measuring and classifying are also an avenue to understanding the move of the g7+ group towards self-labelling and self-measuring, a move I suggest is led by the *symbolic power* of the labelling, reflected in the co-option of the 'labelled';

c) the argument around symbolic power opens important paths to explore possibilities of weakening and change of this power, pointing at the

[12] It is important to highlight I use 'context' in the plain sense of the word. What I mean by context is simply the social and political conditions around a debate, which is further theorised in chapter two.

traps in which quantifiers find themselves, competing to not only produce, but also to provide *useful* data, hence, relying on their relationship with *users* – now very much composed by 'fragile states' officers who became users precisely by embracing the labelling and its practices; and

d) the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' contribute to creating and reinforcing a realm that, in its technicality, becomes comfortably distanced from politicians. This does not mean that these practices evade politics, but that the politics in the measurement faces difficulties in being transposed to the realm of politicians, limiting the scope of change.

These hypotheses highlight subtle power relations amid technological constraints. They also subtly point at how more subjective accounts are pushed away from a seemly irremediably quantified development discourse. Crucially, I suggest that the g7+'s self-labelling and self-measurement are essential for the group's ability to play the game, with the tools that are more easily accessed – statistical tools and techniques, numbers, software and so on – and thus, to have at least a seat reserved at the table. This is not a guarantee of voice or vote, but it places the g7+ in the game with enough space so far to create new forms of assessment and a fairly known lobby in the major debates. Critics who ignore the price of *disengagement* in these numerical dynamics also eliminate the fundamental possibilities of access they bring, with the paradoxical result that the potential for change within the powerful exchanges taking place is also side-lined. This is not to say, however, that the costs for this participation in the game are not high; on the contrary, the price of *engagement* is substantial but, very importantly, it affects all actors, albeit differently. This is an essential part of the potential for change often ignored.

The next two chapters have two main objectives, to provide a historical introduction to the issue of the classification of 'fragile states' and to place my own approach to this classification amid the analyses already existent. The brief history in chapter one looks mainly at how the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' developed in the past decades, what actors and elements became part of the agenda and how. This is concluded with a discussion on how critics generally see these

developments. It is important to highlight that although the historical overview touches upon different themes, the thesis will focus on one aspect of the 'fragile states' agenda, the development sector, as I discuss ahead.

Chapter two follows with a theoretical debate that seeks to acknowledge the contributions of critics but also parts ways with their central assumptions. There, I discuss the insights I borrow from Hacking's philosophy and Bourdieu's sociology, combined with many important contributions from sociologies of quantification.

The thesis proceeds, in chapter three, with a historical sociology, looking at what I suggest was the merge of a quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda. I discuss how a Management for (Development) Results rationale took hold of the development agenda, how it turned its attention to 'fragile states' and how Timor-Leste was caught in these dynamics – its government set to become the co-founder and chair of the g7+, as an eloquent unfolding of years of intense and polemical intervention by donors.

In chapter four, I scrutinise practices of quantification and classification of 'fragile states' and their roots in old statistical reasoning. As will be explained in chapter two, I focus on measuring, monitoring, evaluation and advising. The chapter discusses specifically how it became accepted and expected that *good enough* statistical correlations will explain why states become 'fragile' and how to fix them. I look at these practices as the reflection of practical sense and seek to illustrate how an old and well-established statistical thinking and doing that certify imperfect knowledge are practiced in the 'fragile states' agenda, supporting good enough techniques, good enough institutions and good enough governance. Moreover, I aim to show how the g7+ came to take part in these dynamics, and how its countermove in proposing country-specific indicators and 'realistic' goals is based on this established reasoning around imperfect knowledge, but how it also seeks to somehow mould it anew.

In chapter five, I analyse the skills necessary in these practices of quantification and classification, how they are transferred, taught, learned negotiated and, crucially, how they become a measurable and manageable feature themselves, creating a standard bar for 'fragile states' experts. As such, they are an important part of the construction of 'state fragility' as a

political truth,[13] but they are also a fundamental source of pressure over donors' staff, illustrating the nuances in power this thesis aims to emphasise. I suggest quantifying experts are led to compete for the provision of useful data, with no guaranteed role on the final use of the (now common) free data provided, while trapped into ever-perfectible expertise, required to constantly enrol in training or partnerships to complement their knowledge. In that chapter, therefore, I also aim to understand precisely who all these actors are and how they are positioned in the game.

Chapter six finally discusses the symbolic power I identify in the 'fragile states' agenda. It analyses the constant balancing of engagement and disengagement, with its ever-changing costs and gains. Thus, it looks at the co-option of the 'fragile states' through the self-labelling and self-assessment of the g7+, but it also points at the possibilities of weakening and change brought to the fore by the pressures on experts created by the very demands of the agenda. I conclude chapter six with a discussion around how the quantifying and classifying practices can become a self-contained game at the risk of distancing itself from politicians, and among points for further research, I highlight the challenge of keeping alive more subjective, that is, non-quantified accounts of 'fragility', once the g7+ has entered the game.

The ensemble of these chapters can be read as a 'history of building',[14] in the sequence style of thinking and doing/habitus; practices; skills and resources/capitals; and symbolic power/power relations.

[13] I speak of 'political truth' to convey the idea that it is both constructed and objective in the standards it generates, and thus, in the impacts it enables. This is a pragma*tic* argument in the same sense Hacking lends to his own take on 'truth' or, rather, *truthfulness*, a term he borrows from Williams. '[A]lthough whichever propositions are true depends on data, the fact that they are candidates for being true is a consequence of historical fact.' (Hacking 2007, p. 39). Hacking speaks precisely of 'synthetic *a priori* truth', based on Kant's distinction between analytical and synthetic truths. See Hacking 2002. I avoid going into such a deep philosophical debate that is not essentially linked to this research, but this is indeed the inspiration for my pragmatic 'political truth'. 'Truthfulness' is discussed in chapter two.

[14] Hacking 1999, p. 50.

CHAPTER ONE

AID ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING:

THE CORRELATES OF 'FRAGILITY'

This chapter looks into the history of the 'fragile state' label, its place in a history of the labelling of postcolonial states, the actors involved in this history and the organisational changes that have been accompanying this classification. The idea is to offer a rich enough picture of the specific context in which 'state fragility' has appeared, as well as of the people, practices and techniques that make this classification possible, in order to analyse the critiques and propositions offered so far by various scholars. As will be seen, the power of practicality depicted in the following by the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' helps to think through the many impacts the classification has generated, and most importantly, it leads to an argument against the critical project for the label's dismissal, for its fruitlessness, but mainly for the kind of approach to power it conveys.

1. CORRELATES OF 'FRAGILITY': A TALE OF NUMBERS AND LABELS

I divide this story into five parts: a brief account of the beginning of development assistance to 'poor countries' and the academic takes on these dynamics; the initial steps towards measuring 'state fragility' and the slow change towards the 'fragile state' label; the debate over the

connection between security and development; the central role of the development industry in quantifying the 'fragile states' agenda; and the foundation of the g7+.

1.1. AID TO THE POOR: A 'RIGHT TO DEVELOP'

The underpinning practices of aid selection and allocation have changed dramatically in the past six decades, from ready-made speeches with executive powers, to ideologically-justified bribery, to the beginnings of a development industry, and now, to a highly skilled and quantified analysis that intersects with security concerns in previously unimagined bureaucratic practices. Slowly, since the end of the Second World War, not only did the labels for postcolonial countries change, but also the whole organisational machinery that makes classification of countries and aid allocation possible.

The point of departure is well known: A giant in the history of development aid and a milestone commonly mentioned by practitioners and academics, the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild countries after the Second World War.[1] Europe alone received around $13 billion from the end of the war until 1951.[2] It was justified as a 'logical' step in the 'return of normal economic health in the world, without which', in the words of the then US Secretary of the State, George Marshall, 'there can be no political stability and no assured peace'.[3] This was, however, a well understood case of merely recovering previously rich and 'stable' countries. It was only after the wave of independence in the colonies and in the context of the Cold War rivalries that aid to 'poor countries' was systematically implemented.[4] It was also only after the Cold War that this aid became increasingly anchored in a complex ever changing set of indicators, turning policy-making into a quasi-science.

During the Cold War, aid was the reward for alignment, no strings attached apart ideological ones.[5] The Great Powers' purpose was to win allies among the then called Third World for one block or the other. Then recently independent countries were luring options and paid dearly but

[1] Helman and Ratner June 21, 2010.
[2] See George C. Marshall Foundation, 'The Marshall Plan'.
[3] OECD, 'The "Marshall Plan" speech at Harvard University'.
[4] See accounts of these changes in Jackson 1990 and Clapham 2000.
[5] For an insightful discussion, see Dunning 2004.

indirectly for the aid received: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for instance, was the scene of some of the most violent proxy clashes between the US and the Soviet Union.[6]

Close to the end of the Cold War, aid was less explicitly strategic but many governments in the so-called Third World still received considerable support from the US or the Soviet Union. However, in the 1980s, this form of allocating aid was already being problematised. Critics verbalised shock at the new international order and the fact that 'weak states' with no empirical sovereignty – no real 'power' – were being granted self-determination through international juridical guarantees of non-intervention. They called this conceded sovereignty 'juridical' only, and many went as far as to argue that the rule of non-intervention was actually opening space for unsustainable political units that would have no incentive to develop 'empirical' sovereignty. In fact, Jackson argued in *Quasi-States* that with foreign aid compensating for institutional weakness, an 'international law of development' was established. This, he argued, extended self-determination to the economic realm and granted 'sovereignty plus' to states in the 'Third World', based on a 'right to assistance' or 'right to develop'.[7] According to the author, this 'sovereignty plus', in turn, made it hard for real development to take place.[8] In response to this 'new international order', Jackson argued for 'more intrusive forms of international trusteeship', to mitigate the costs of 'quasi-statehood' for the country's own people. For him, it was ironic that 'the same institution which provided international recognition, dignity, and independence to all colonized populations could be exploited to deny domestic civility, liberty, and welfare to some' in the poorest countries in the world.[9]

This momentum in the debate about the 'Third World' was intensified by the end of the Cold War. It is argued that the lack of clear and pressing geopolitical concerns in fact removed what had been the major drives of foreign aid. In 1992, Helman and Ratner – then retired from the US Foreign Service and on leave from the State Department's Office for the Legal Adviser, respectively – wrote an influential article for *Foreign Policy*

[6] See Dunn 2003, pp. 85-97.
[7] Jackson 1990, p. 43.
[8] Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Jackson 1990, p. 118.
[9] Jackson 1990, p. 202.

discussing the need to address the problems of 'failed' and 'failing' states. The authors stated that 'the failed nation state' was 'utterly incapable of sustaining itself as a member of the international community', and delivered an ominous warn that 'heavy tolls' would necessarily be inflicted on 'failing states'' own people and 'on all countries'.[10] They proposed new UN-approved forms of trusteeship or conservatorship, as they called them, with the aim to enable states to resume responsibility for themselves.[11]

Even if the solutions proposed varied considerably and not many policy-makers officially embraced more intrusive responses, the core of the argument was getting through, that 'failed states' needed special attention from the international community. Indeed, in 1993, the then US Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, stated, in a speech to justify aid and intervention in Somalia:

> The decision we must make is whether to pull up stakes and allow Somalia to fall back into the abyss or to stay the course and help lift the country and its people from the category of a failed state into that of an emerging democracy. For Somalia's sake, and ours, we must persevere.[12]

It was the 'ours' that denoted the image 'failed states' were acquiring at the time; their problems were slowly becoming 'global' problems. In 1994, this tone acquired apocalyptical notes when an American journalist, Robert D. Kaplan, wrote what was considered an extremely compelling article, *The Coming Anarchy*.[13] The piece depicted a horrendous near future of human misery and chaos in what he called '*collapsing states*', previously part of the 'Third World' and mostly represented by African countries. It was a forecast and an admonition:

> Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. West Africa provides an appropriate introduction to the issues, often extremely unpleasant to discuss, that will soon confront our civilization.[14]

[10] Helman and Ratner June 21, 2010.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Albright 10 August 1993.
[13] Kaplan 1 February 1994. Later to become a book, Kaplan 2002.
[14] Ibid.

In the last paragraph of the article, he warns: '…Afrocentrists are right in one respect: we ignore this dying region at our own risk.'[15]

This view reflected the assumptions of many scholars at the time that the world was somehow splitting into a 'zone of peace' and a 'zone of turmoil'.[16] The first was occupied by well-established and stable democracies whose problems transmuted into economic struggles, and the second was populated by then recently independent countries, politically unstable and frequently in conflict. One of the authors of this proposition, Max Singer, was also the founder of the Correlates of War project, at the University of Michigan, an initiative whose 'fundamental goal [was] not just to measure the temporal and spatial variation in war but rather to identify factors that would systematically *explain* this variation.'[17]

1.2. QUANTIFYING 'STATE FRAGILITY': WE WILL NOT BE TAKEN BY SURPRISE

It was in this context that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sponsored a State Failure Task Force, composed of academics from different American universities, tasked with designing an empirical research on the 'correlates of state failure' from the mid-1950s on.[18] The overall feeling among analysts was that American politicians were keen to understand how the world had gotten them by surprise as it had with the end of the Cold War. There seemed to be a new compromise to produce enough data on key events around the world so this would not happen again.[19] Hence, the objective of the Task Force was to measure causes of instability in the post-Cold War period through a data-driven research on

[15] Ibid.
[16] Singer and Wildavsky 1996.
[17] Correlates of War, 'Project History'. My emphasis. The rationale was widespread at the 60s and 70s. It was based on the strong position then increasingly occupied by Behavioralism in the American social sciences. Behavioralist scholars sought the systematic and scientific quantification of what were seen as patterns in social and political events for the sake of finding correlations that would explain and predict such phenomena. For an overview, see Hamati-Ataya 2012. Although the debates around Behavioralism are obviously pertinent to the issues discussed here, I look at the broad quantifying and classifying rationale growing around this time; first, because this was not the exclusive 'product' of Behavioralism – chapter three will discuss how long-dated many of the bases are for this rationale – and, second, because such a debate would unhelpfully divert the focus on *current* practices in the 'fragile states' agenda. For an interesting indirect contrast that has more to contribute to this thesis, see Desrosières 18 march 2003.
[18] Political Instability Task Force, 'Political Instability Task Force. Internal Wars and Failures of Governance, 1955-Most Recent Year'.
[19] Goldstone 2008. See also Esty, Goldstone et al. 30 November 1995.

'state failure'. All outputs were visually peppered with maps, graphs and tables. The initiative would have long life, going much beyond the initial objectives to later work with data on democracy and terrorism.[20] In fact, facing the 'coming anarchy', as 'state failure' was seen, analysts started to break it down and the labels started to multiply along with their perceived many components. Furthermore, the visual realisation that correlates of 'failure' could be aggregated differently for different countries seems to have been a crucial step in the beginning of a broad move to produce varied subcategories.

This move was still shy in the mid-1990s, but some research was already beginning to move against generalisations of 'state failure' and towards a continuum, from the 'weakest' to the 'least weak states'. For instance, in 1996, in an article specifically aimed at developing a taxonomy of 'state failure', Gros presented five categories of 'failed states' – however, still then based on qualitative analysis: 'anarchic', 'phantom', 'anaemic', 'captured' and 'aborted' states. These followed a Weberian understanding of the functions of a state and how efficiently and authoritatively they were fulfilled.[21]

In the background of this urge to classify 'state failure', there was always a discussion on how feasible the so-called failed states actually were. As Jackson had done in 1990, Herbst proposed in 1997 to think of alternatives for the state system, from accepting the sovereignty of new states – viable parts of 'failed' ones – to considering the role of local authorities besides the state, and even the extreme solution of decertifying 'failed states':[22] 'The international society has yet to acknowledge that some states simply do not work'.[23] Others were thinking along the same lines of 'active' solutions to 'state failure' but based on more local responses. Mazrui's propositions, for instance, focused on African coalition initiatives and the African use of force in the continent.[24]

However, the breaking of what Herbst called an intellectual log-jam[25] and the acceptance of restraints to sovereignty in 'failed states'

[20] Ibid.
[21] Gros 1996.
[22] Herbst 1996/97.
[23] Ibid., p. 144.
[24] Mazrui Spring 1995.
[25] Herbst 1996/97.

advocated by Jackson, Herbst and others to come[26] were never officially promoted as policy towards 'state failure'. Instead, there were increasing efforts to make sense of what 'state failure' was and what its components, causes and consequences were, first and foremost.

As part of these initiatives, the State Failure Task Force was working on the second report of its series on 'failed states'. The document, published in 1999, reflected an increasingly detailed analysis of the types of 'failures', with a renewed focus on democracy and its weight on 'state failure'.[27] The developed model worked with only three factors: the level of infant mortality, the level of trade openness, and the level of democracy, considered together the 'most efficient discrimination between "failure cases" and stable states'.[28] The main expressed concern was to find out which of all these factors could compromise post-Cold War stability and how much impact they would have. After this report, a third was yet released in 2000 in which the expressed goal was to identify which state characteristics could pose 'a risk of serious political instability'.[29] By then, the research counted on around two dozen experts and the database contained nearly 1,300 political, demographic, economic, social, and environmental variables from all countries between 1955 and 1998.[30]

Quantification had taken momentum and was growing exponentially. In Canada, a similar initiative was taking place at Carleton University in partnership with the Canadian government,[31] the *Country Indicators for Foreign Policy*, 'part of a broader effort to enable more effective international engagement in failed and fragile states'.[32] The project has three key elements: a focus on monitoring, forecasting, and evaluation of 'failed' and 'fragile states'; a methodology to analyse individual country performance; and statistical and theoretical work on the relation between 'state fragility' and selected key variables.[33] The last ranking of countries

[26] See Dorff 2000; Krasner 20 July 2002, 2004; Krasner and Pascual 2005. On intervention, see Ignatieff Winter 2002.
[27] Esty, Goldstone et al. Summer 1999. The phase II report used the same types of 'state failure' – 'revolutionary wars, 'genocide/politicides', 'adverse regime transitions' and 'ethnic wars' – but refined the variable on democracy.
[28] Ibid., p. 51.
[29] Goldstone, Gurr et al. 30 September 2000.
[30] Ibid., p. iv.
[31] The research was commissioned in 1997 and the first report available, published in 1999, discussed human rights and field operations.
[32] Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP), 'About CIFP'.
[33] Ibid.

available to the public was published in 2007, with Sudan and Somalia at the top.[34] As with the State Failure Task Force,[35] this was also a long-term research project and it involved dozens of experts in parallel streams of work.[36]

By this time, research on 'state failure' was expanding in terms of scope, people and the volume of data produced. The more material was produced, the more nuances to 'failure' were been studied and proposed, along with new categories or subcategories, and more elements were mixed together in the form of variables and proxy indicators to analyse the causes and consequences of 'state failure'. In the following eight to ten years, the 'failed state' label became less and less used,[37] while 'fragile' was increasingly applied, along with a few other labels, such as 'weak' or 'crisis states'.[38] 'State fragility' also became constantly linked to both security and development concerns, and the many reports produced on the

[34] See Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) 2007.
[35] In 2003, it became the Political Instability Task Force. Goldstone 2008.
[36] Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP), 'About CfIP'.
[37] Jack A. Goldstone, in charge of the Political Instability Task Force (known before as State Failure Task Force), says that at the beginning of the first Bush Administration, the government was trying to avoid the 'failed state' term, as it was seen as counter-productive in the then new engagement with countries that were seen as potential havens for terrorists (Goldstone 27 January 2014). Therefore, the research group dropped the label and was renamed '*Political Instability* Task Force'. No labels were used in the last report, *A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability (*Goldstone, Bates et al. January 2010). However, other documents from the US government and the USAID continued using 'failed' and 'fragile', among others labels (USAID January 2005; United States of America 2006).
[38] Weinstein, Porter et al. 2004; CSRC 2006. As with any label, a precise origin is frequently impossible to pin-point. This thesis aims exactly to show how intermingled, often unintended and unpredictable practices and results meet in the 'fragile states' agenda, hence looking for *one* point of origin and *one* actor would be contradictory. Both Nay and Bouchet mention the influence and leadership of the UK's DfID and the World Bank in setting the agenda in the realm of the OECD, by steering the work of the Fragile States Group. They also point to the importance of the 2005 Senior Level Meeting in London, the first international event, as far as I know, to have 'fragile states' in the title (all these mentioned ahead). However, for this meeting, a few background papers were produced by ODI staff that already used the 'fragile states' label and were commissioned, at least one of them, by OECD's Learning and Advisory Process on Difficult Partnership in 2004. Furthermore, a 2006 World Bank document entitled *Strengthening the World Bank Group's Rapid Response and Long-Term Engagement in Fragile States* attributes to OECD the central role in using the label (see page 1, footnote 1) and affirms the Bank adopted the label in January 2006. Nevertheless, this can be contradicted by looking at the footnote just below that one, which cites a key 2005 document by the World Bank that already used the label. The footnote 1 might have referred to the official acceptance by the Board. These, in any case, are the fuzzy 'origins' of the label in development policy and can only testify to the blurred construction of 'fragile states'. See Nay 2014; Bouchet 2 Dec 2011; Lockhart [2004]; ODI 17 Dec 2004; Fragile States Group (Operations Policy and Country Services) 30 March 2007.
[38] The LICUS Initiative 2005. See also a few of the background papers for the meetings: ODI 17 Dec 2004; Lockhart [2004].

topic often mentioned the need for work in these areas to be interconnected in 'fragile states'.[39]

1.3. SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING THE CONNECTION

In that sense, the post-9/11 war on terror was a milestone in the international approach to 'state fragility'. More attention, more concerns, and much more research were brought in, in an attempt to understand the social, economic and political risks allegedly presented by 'fragile states', those countries where, it was argued, terrorists come from and/or are trained in. The 2002 US *National Security Strategy*'s statement 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones' has been repeated *ad eternum* in policy reports and academic papers.[40] The strategy presented by the document was to become known as the '3Ds': defence, diplomacy and development.[41] It presented development as one key pillar of US foreign policy to the extent it could work against potential security threats: 'Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders'.[42] The argumentative move was also practiced in think tanks, by practitioners and academics, while the link between 'weak states' and terrorism became irremediably absorbed by the literature, even if criticised by some.[43]

> These attacks constituted a wake-up call, in both the development and security communities, to a new, shared challenge. The large number of weak and failed states emerged as a central challenge of both the fight against terrorism and the fight against global poverty. It is in weak and fragile states that the development project often fails, and it is in those settings too where militant and extremist ideologies too easily take root.[44]

[39] Weinstein, Porter et al. 2004
[40] Crocker 2003; USAID January 2005; Matthews July 2006; Patrick 2011.
[41] USAID January 2005, p. v.
[42] Ibid., Foreword.
[43] Crocker 2003; AusAID 2005; Comite Interministerial de la Cooperacion International et du Developement 2007; Department for International Development (DFID) January 2005; USAID January 2005; Matthews July 2006; Comite Interministerial de la Cooperacion International et du Developement 2007; Patrick 2011.
[44] Ibid., p. v.

The connection of so many different elements under the 'state fragility' umbrella slowly increased awareness to new possible modes of mobilisation. In a 2008 conference on 'weak and failed states', then US Congressman Adam Smith made an important remark:

> I have been campaigning for a long time on a basic door-to-door status going out and finding out what people in my suburban community care about and they care about stuff that is immediate…National security is one of those things that they now care about and I believe in order to get the resources and focus on global poverty, on weak and failed states and all of the issues that go into that, to get that focus we have got to make that national security connection. We have got to make it clear that we will not be safe here in the U.S. as long as we have so much destabilization in so many parts of the world and to get them involved and invested.

Also telling, Smith was then serving at the Armed Services Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee, he chaired the Terrorism Subcommittee on Armed Services and co-created the Congressional Caucus for Effective Foreign Assistance.[45] The arguments in favour of combining security and development concerns, for one reason or another, were gaining ground.

Similar moves could be seen in Europe. In 2003, the *European Strategic Concept* also presented 'failed states' as a 'new threat', proposing a set of mixed tools to stabilise and rebuild 'failed states', including military and economic instruments, humanitarian aid and civilian crisis management.[46] In the same year, the *European Security Strategy* placed 'failed states' among the 'key threats' facing Europe: 'Collapse of the State can be associated with obvious threats, such as organised crime or terrorism… Such criminal activities are often associated with weak or failing states.'[47]

As the US *National Security Strategy* called for development as a key to deal with the security risks in 'fragile states' and such move was becoming increasingly strong in Europe, the phenomenon was also the target of new initiatives by development organisations. In 2001, the World Bank initiated a discussion on what it then called LICUS, Low-Income Countries under Stress, reflecting 'the growing literature on the problems of

[45] The Brookings Insttitution 2008, pp. 6, 10. See also U.S. House of Representatives, 'Congressional Caucus for Effective Foreign Assistance'.
[46] Assembly of Western European Union 2003, p. 15.
[47] Council of the European Union 2003, pp. 3-4.

"failed states", "fragile states", "collapsed states", and "difficult partnerships"'.[48] One year later, it founded the LICUS Unit, which worked together with the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit to tackle 'state fragility'. The Bank's efforts on LICUS countries were based on a new operational policy, allowing the Bank to work in conflict-affected states.[49] This work brought a new quantifying boost to the topic of 'fragile states', marked by the use of the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) to band and therefore define 'fragile states' based on performance scores, and the creation of the Post-Conflict Performance Indicators (PCPI), to inaugurate the Bank's measurement of indicators on security (these assessments are discussed ahead).[50] The CPIA would soon provide the perhaps most numerical and well known definition available of 'fragile states': those states below the 3.2 threshold of its quantified ranking, which attributes scores to institutional performance.

Also in 2003, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), through its Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD), founded the Fragile States Group (FSG), now called International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF),[51] with the aim to 'improve development effectiveness in fragile states', by developing knowledge on issues of 'state fragility' and engaging with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission.[52] The collaboration produced what is now seen as a key document about the topic, the *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*, subscribed by all major donors and organisations. The *Principles* suggests there is a need to recognise the link between security, political and development objectives, among other goals.[53]

By this time, non-engagement was seen as a non-option, and solutions proposed advocated integrated and coordinated approaches. This could be seen to encompass anything, from debt relief and foreign aid to 'neotrusteeship' for some scholars. Suggested by Fearon and Laitin, a

[48] Independent Evaluation Department (IEG) 2006a, p. 1.
[49] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2006b, p. 129; World Bank
[50] Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS) February 2011, footnote 1.
[51] INCAF [2009].
[52] OECD 2006
[53] OECD 2007b.

'neotrusteeship', as other forms of more intrusive interventions advocated,[54] would derive authority from an international coalition led by the UN, integrate several components and experts from different countries and aim to exert control, as in imperialist times, but also to exit quickly, supposedly marking a difference from colonial relations.[55] This was an admittedly extreme version of what others at the time were calling 'statebuilding', 'whole of government' approach or simply 'policy coherence'. These more nuanced options were rapidly moving onto the table, seen as the multifaceted answers the 'state fragility problem' required.[56]

With the discussion on the tools to be used also came a move towards operationalising these approaches, so that in 2005 several organisations produced key policy documents on 'fragile states', including development banks and multilateral institutions.[57] In addition, new agencies were created to act on the ground, such as the US Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), later integrated to the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO),[58] and the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU), later named Stabilisation Unit, in the UK. The overall objective for both agencies was to come up with a structure that would allow and incentivise 'whole of government' approaches in 'fragile states'[59] – in the case of the S/CRS, this was based on what the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had called 'smart power', one which would make use of all diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural tools available.[60] While these approaches were being refined, the agencies also invested in staff and expertise. In 2007, when the PCRU, coordinated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MoD), and the Department for International Development (DfID), became

[54] Jackson 1990; Herbst 1996/97; Krasner 2004.
[55] Fearon and Laitin Spring 2004
[56] See, for example, Lockhart [2004]; World Bank 19 Dec 2005; OECD 2006; Patrick and Brown 2007.
[57] World Bank 19 Dec 2005); USAID January 2005; AusAID 2005; Department for International Development (DFID) January 2005; United Nations Development Group and World Bank January 2005. See also UN General Assembly 2005: 'If States are fragile, the peoples of the world will not enjoy the security, development and justice that are their right. Therefore, one of the great challenges of the new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face.' (p. 6).
[58] The integration happened in 2011. See Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, 'Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations'.
[59] Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), 'Frequently Asked Questions'.
[60] Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) 2009.

the Stabilisation Unit, it established a Civilian Stabilisation Group, which counted, as of 2014, with more than 900 Deployable Civilian Experts 'willing and able to deploy to fragile and conflict-affected countries to assist the UK Government in addressing instability'.[61] By 2005, also Canada had a specialized joint force to deal with 'state fragility', the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START), established to coordinate whole-of-government projects in 'fragile states'.[62] START is supported by 12 national agencies and departments across the Canadian government and mobilises 'civilian experts' to help 'advance stabilization and reconstruction of fragile, failing or conflict affected states'.[63] In common, CSO, the Stabilisation Unit and START aim to form and deploy experts to work in 'fragile states' as part of a national strategy that aims to establish connections between security and development concerns.

1.4. MEASURING PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVING RESULTS: THE ROLE OF INDICATORS

Meanwhile, academics and analysts were working to influence the direction such initiatives would take, both in terms of priorities and operationalisation. In 2005, the Fund for Peace, for example, began its series of the *Failed States Index*, published annually by Foreign Policy, and since 2014 called *Fragile States Index*. The index analyses 12 indicators and 14 sub-indicators for each of them, aiming to be a 'user-friendly' tool to facilitate policy-making, through an 'empirically based' and 'objective' approach. The stated reasoning: 'Without the right data, it is impossible to identify problems that may be festering "below the radar." Decision makers need access to this kind of information to implement effective policies.'[64] With the same rationale and in the same year, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also published a document on the tool it was developing for measuring 'fragility', the Conflict and Fragility Alert,

[61] Stabilisation Unit, 'The UK Civilian Stabilisation Group'.
[62] See Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START), 'About the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force'.
[63] Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START), ' How We Responde to Conflict and Crisis Abroad' and Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START), 'What We Work On'.
[64] Fund for Peace 2013, p. 9. See also Fund for Peace, 'About the Fund for Peace'.

Consultation, and Tracking System (C/FACTS).[65] The agency proposed a matrix of 'state performance outcomes', considering, on one side, effectiveness and legitimacy, and on the other side, political, security, economic and social indicators.[66] The agency used 'fragile state' to embrace 'failed, failing and recovering states' and subdivided 'fragile states' between 'crisis' and 'vulnerable states'.[67] It is not clear how much of the framework and data were actually used by policy-makers, as the exercise as policy was officially abandoned in 2006, although it is said the rankings were still annually produced and circulated among US officials after that.[68]

This move towards developing indicators, measuring performance of state institutions and understanding the impact of 'state fragility' was not only led and encouraged by the new focus of national strategies around the world, but also, and *very importantly in this thesis*, reflected the overall debate in the development sector in the mid-2000s. For practitioners then, it was clear that the usual performance-based aid allocation systems were leaving some countries behind, and this was the case of precisely those countries that needed aid the most.[69] By 2005, the development debate was focusing on 'fragile states' as the aid orphans lagging behind on the path to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): 'Aid to fragile states, other than those emerging from recent conflict, appears to be disproportionately low in aggregate terms and twice as volatile as in other low income countries.'[70] Hence, the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* called donors' attention to the need to not only increase aid to 'fragile states' but also to harmonise it and make it more effective in reducing poverty and promoting growth.[71] The problem identified by the development sector, however, was that 'fragile states', were, as all analysts were saying at the time, also a security challenge.

The 2005 *Human Development Report* made this interconnection clear and advocated more integrated approaches to 'state fragility': 'Starving conflict-prone or post-conflict states of aid is unjustified. It is bad

[65] USAID June 2005.
[66] USAID January 2005, pp. 4, 7, 8.
[67] Ibid., p. 1.
[68] Bhuta 2012, p. 156. Confirmed by anonymous commentators in talks I was part of during the OECD-INCAF ministerial meetings on 5-6 June 2013.
[69] See UNDP 2005, p. 13, chapter 3.
[70] The LICUS Initiative 2005, p. 2.
[71] OECD 2005/2008, p. 2.

for human security in the countries concerned – and it is bad for *global security*.'[72] The report suggested that some of the challenges linked to human insecurity and violent conflict could be traced to 'fragile' and 'failing states', and argued for a new focus for the development agenda. If the MDGs were to be met in the ten years to follow, the document stated, the new agenda would have to be supported by three pillars: aid, trade and security.[73]

The development industry was making a point of recognising the challenges of 'fragile states', acknowledging the risks of not responding to them and working to measure exactly how much impact aid could have on growth and specific policies in 'fragile states'.[74] This was a discussion tied to the need to improve not only aid performance in 'fragile states', but also to modify the organisational and operational structures of development agencies. If aid would be increased in favour of 'fragile states' in a context seen as one of instability and violence, agencies would need to offer clear accountability to donor countries – and these, to their citizens – as to the results of the aid provided. Therefore, the new agenda on aid effectiveness became central, with increasing focus on how to make every dollar count.

Accordingly, most agencies vested their programmes with a rationale of '*measuring for results*', thus establishing clear targets for all projects funded and constantly monitoring performance against these targets.[75] The realisation that the deadline for meeting the MDGs was close by and that 'fragile states' were far away on that track seems to have intensified practices of data production in the development industry. Statistics became crucial, as well as developing efficient methods for their collection, analysis and use in policy-making towards 'fragile states'.

> Whether we wish to adjust the size of our fiscal deficit, increase social spending, pursue macroeconomic convergence in the region, or assess progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, accurate, timely, useful data lie at the heart of all these efforts... Achieving the right policies requires the management of trade-offs informed by good statistics.[76]

[72] UNDP 2005, p. 13. My emphasis.
[73] Ibid., Overview.
[74] Ibid. See also Baliamoune-Lutz and McGlillivray April 2008; Bertoli and Ticci 2012.
[75] United Nations Development Group and World Bank January 2005; International Development Association (IDA) November 2004.
[76] Trevor Manuel, 'Data for poverty measurement', Opening address at the Joint National Treasury/World Bank Workshop, Pretoria, 28 June 2004, *apud* International Development Association (IDA) November 2004, p. 1.

By 2006 the World Bank was discussing the results of the first independent evaluation of the Bank's engagement with 'fragile states'. It was to decide on the changes that would be implemented in terms of operational policies, incentives to staff and improvements in the knowledge base available or how it was conveyed to staff.[77] In 2007, as part of the consequent overhaul of the Bank's strategy towards 'fragile states' and under the leadership of president Zoellick, the Conflict Prevention Unit and the LICUS Unit were almost merged into a Fragile and Conflict-Affected Unit. In addition, a Conflict, Fragile States and Social Development team was established inside the Bank's Africa regional Vice Presidency. The World Bank aimed to become increasingly prepared to a reality where dealing with conflict was seen as an essential part of promoting development in the complex scenario of 'state fragility'.[78]

Around the same time and thereafter, practices that classify 'fragile states' multiplied exponentially. They combined 'correlates of state fragility' being increasingly produced and the focus of the development sector on aid effectiveness amid interventions designed to work in situations of conflict. The 'fragile states' agenda in the making became crucially based on the quantification of causes and consequences of 'state fragility' and the measured effectiveness of different forms of interventions.

The common motivation for quantifying and classifying practices has been the belief that policy-makers are in constant need of improved, 'straightforward', 'user-friendly' and 'easily accessible' tools based on empirical data and capable of generating supporting material for policy decisions as to where and how to allocate resources.[79] In that sense, in 2008 two well-known indices were produced: the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World*, by Rice and Patrick, published by the Brookings Institution; and the *Global Report on Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility 2008*, by Marshall and Cole, from the George Mason University.[80] In general, as seen, indices on 'state fragility' aim to order data in a way as

[77] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2006, part 4.
[78] International Alert 2008; Zoellick 2008.
[79] By Stewart Patrick, one of the authors of the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World*, transcribed in Brookings Institution 26 February 2008, p. 26.
[80] Rice and Patrick 2008; Marshall and Cole 2008. Marshall had been involved with the State Failure Task Force.

to enable easier and faster decision-making regarding the allocations of time, resources and personnel.[81]

The mood for such initiatives was also encouraged by and reflected in certain works in academia that sought to refine the label as a conceptual and analytical tool, by proposing alternatives or subcategories along the same lines of measuring capacity, efficiency and stability.[82] Meanwhile, analysts were also trying to determine the accuracy, impacts and political orientation of the many rankings being produced. However, it became clear that these impacts were hard to grasp with certainty.[83] The World Bank's CPIA, for instance, is vastly criticised; it measures four clusters of indicators on the policy and institutional performance of 'client' countries' governments, rating each with a score from 1 to 6, all scores which are then added to complex formulae to calculate aid allocation. It is determined that any country with an average score below 3.2 is a 'fragile state'.[84] It has always been difficult for critiques to simultaneously take into account the fact that the ranking was never meant to classify 'fragile states',[85] that it does so with a clearly expressed focus on efficiency rather than need, that it has powerful impacts on 'fragile states', and that 'fragile states', however, cannot completely disengage, if governments have plans to have access to further funding. Nevertheless, the system's banding of 'fragile states' below the 3.2 threshold has been largely accepted as a practical (and numerical) definition of 'state fragility'.[86]

The CPIA ratings are intended to guide the resource allocation of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), for which, as of 2014, 31 countries classified as 'fragile' were eligible.[87] The CPIA is also largely adopted as the basis for decisions taken by various agencies, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development

[81] Rice and Patrick 2008, p. 7.
[82] See, for example, Call 2008 (further developed on Call 2010); and in a more critical tone, Nay 2013. Nay seems to believe in 'analytically better' alternative labels, but refrains from proposing them.
[83] Stepputat and Engberg-Pedersen 2008; Fabra Mata and Ziaja 2009.
[84] See Annex 2. I discuss these formulae in chapter three.
[85] Interview with Rui Countinho. More ahead.
[86] Department for International Development (DFID) January 2005, p. 7; African Development Bank (AfDB) January 2008, note 4 (although criticising some of its aspects, the AfDB affirms that the 'CPIA remains as the best available, simplest and most transparent single measure'). Until 2008, the CPIA was also the only basis for OECD's list of 'fragile states'. Now the CPIA is complemented by other rankings. See International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) Februrary 2010, note 3.
[87] International Development Association (IDA) March 2013.

Bank (ADB), Scandinavian governments, the UK and France. Moreover, '[e]ven where not used explicitly, CPIA rankings serve to signal "good performers" to other aid agencies'.[88] Resources are limited but the demand is not, enhancing the relevance of this formula. As a natural unfolding, the system's many powerful implications lead to frequent suggestions to either perfect or abolish it, based on critiques of its accuracy, theoretical background and applicability.[89]

The critiques to the CPIA classification are similar to the ones directed at other rankings of 'fragile states', regarding the impossibility of measuring certain social features of a state, the accuracy of numbers, the aggregation of different indicators and the due contextualisation of certain comparisons between countries.[90] However, as with many indices of 'state fragility', the visibility and impactful nature of numbers seem to draw criticism and encourage never-ending revisions, which, rather than weakening the data, only intensify their circulation. Nevertheless, as the producers of such exercises are requested by critics to open up their rationale and make clear their 'scientific' bases, these have tended to become more open. Therefore, as discussed ahead, critiques multiply and expand in paradoxical circularity.

It was in this context that, since 2005 and the *Paris Declaration*, a stated compromise by the development industry to invest in dialogue with 'fragile states' has been issued, allegedly aiming at improving comprehension and engagement. It was under this lead that the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) was created, in 2008, hosted by the OECD. The move that is central to this research was to be much connected to the establishment of this Dialogue.

1.5. THE FOUNDATION OF THE G7+: LABEL AND NUMBERS

In 2011, during the 4th High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness in Busan, the g7+ group of self-labelled fragile states was created in a closed door

[88] African Development Bank (AfDB), 'Country Resource Allocation', accessed 19 August 2013; Independent Evaluation Department, *Asian Development Bank's Support*; Fabra Mata and Ziaja, 'User's Guide', box 1. See also International Development Association (IDA) March 2013, annex 3.
[89] See Gelb, Ngo and Ye, *Performance-Based Aid in Africa*; Guillaumont, 'Adapting Aid Allocation Criteria'; Kararach, et al., 'Is There a Case'; Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), 'An IEG evaluation'. See also AfDB, 'Enhanced Engagement', 5.
[90] Ibid.

meeting of 'fragile states'' representatives, organised under the auspices of the OECD-NCAF and the IDPS. From 2010 to 2013, the g7+ was chaired by Timor-Leste's Minister of Finance, Emília Pires, and in 2014, Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance of Sierra Leone, took the lead.[91] The group saw the initiative as a move towards leadership:

> Fragile states must take the reins when it comes to ways development partners give them official development assistance… For us to better guide our development partners and to contribute to a better management of external aid, we have to take the leadership.[92]

In fact, the g7+ as a group never officially advocated for *more* aid to 'fragile states'; this is nowhere expressed among official documents. The main proposal has been for a 'different paradigm' for development assistance, that is, *how* aid is provided:[93] 'The g7+ was formed in response to a gap identified by conflict-affected states in the effectiveness of aid partnerships and delivery in their countries.'[94] In that sense, the g7+ was quick to catch up with the latest practices in the development sector, and the *New Deal* proposed by the group as a new form of engagement with 'fragile states' included their own *Fragility Assessment*.[95] The group states that the exercise is their response to the measurement executed by donors with a 'standard yardstick', and a reaction to issues such as the use of outdated data – generally justified by donors as related to the difficulty of collecting data in these countries – and the establishment of 'overambitious' targets that do not consider the countries' different points of departure. The group quantifies its self-labelled 'fragility' but it has also raised important critiques. Ultimately, the g7+ says, 'indicators determined by international actors do not draw on the true experts on fragility – the citizens of fragile

[91] g7+, 'About'
[92] By Minister Emília Pires. See Crook 8 April 2010.
[93] It is of course to be observed if this line will change, but so far and as far as I know, no documents, interviews or official speeches of the g7+'s spokespersons have advanced a request for more aid as an official proposition; and except for the small changes in the CPIA formula proposed in 2013 (on 'fragile states') and discussed ahead, no significant changes in aid volume have been observed towards g7+'s member countries in particular. The main official documents, such as the Dili Declaration, Haiti Declaration and Lomé Comuniqué mention only a proposed change in the way development assistance is promoted. See g7+ 2010; g7+ 14 Nov 2012; g7+ 30 May 2014. Similarly stated in interviews with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar and Emília Pires.
[94] g7+, 'Pathways towards Resilience. The journey continues…'
[95] See g7+, 'A New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States'. The tools developed by the group will be explored in details along the next chapters.

states themselves'.[96] The main point to be highlighted here is that this initiative of some governments to get together and to not only create a group of self-labelled fragile states, but also develop their own exercise of quantifying 'state fragility' has been the odd ball in the classification of 'fragile states' narrative.

The fact that rankings measure social elements in a way that many scholars find absolutely arbitrary, the realisation that rankings can have powerful impacts on aid allocation, and the fact that most of the impacts of most indices, or the indices themselves, will probably never be known for sure, lead many scholars to focus on criticising the idea of classifying states as a whole, for the potential impacts on the countries labelled. This adds to a long list of critiques raised against these forms of classifying postcolonial states, for their said Western bias and the power relations such labels are seen to reflect and enable. The initiative by the g7+, however, draws attention to the possibility of these practices being something less straight-forward and unilateral and much more complex in terms of the relations of power involved. It raises questions about the necessary 'evil' of quantification and ranking, and about the role of those 'labelled' in these practices.

As established by the points of departure mentioned in the Introduction, the impacts of the classification of 'fragile states' and its accompanying quantification permeate this whole thesis, as they are at the core of my research question. Therefore, I do not dedicate one specific section to the impacts of this classification at this point. In the following, I aim to discuss only the critical approaches towards the topic and the limitations I identify in those, and from there, discuss my own position in this debate.

Before moving to these critiques, however, it is important to stress that although the historical analysis dealt with different labels, this does not mean they are, should or will be used interchangeably in this research. The same non-assumption guides the following section. Nonetheless, I present the critiques to the topic respecting their own position regarding the labels. The critical scholars to be mentioned generally affirm that '[d]espite differences between these [labels] in focus and emphasis, they are united

[96] Democratic Republic of Congo 27 November 2013, p. 5.

by a variety of shared assumptions', which are precisely these critics' target. Their focus being on the common 'deviation' from Western 'successful states' that is said to be implicit in all these labels, specific labels are a matter of indifference, so long as the dichotomist rationale criticised is maintained.[97] I, however, do not assume interchangeability. I focus here on the specific label of 'fragile states' because the objects I will look into, the practices and rankings that classify 'fragile states', do measure and label *'fragile states'*, and it is those specific practices and their effects that I aim to understand.

2. CRITIQUES TO CLASSIFICATION: THE STATE AND FRAGILITY

Critics to the classification of postcolonial states see in the 'fragile state' label one more form of Western control and domination. Indeed, taking into account the many possibilities of direct intervention, monitoring, conditioning and restriction of access to assistance raised by certain forms of classification, the history of labelling postcolonial states in terms of 'failure' or 'fragility' raises many concerns and much opposition among critical scholars. These critiques can generally be divided according to the targets they choose: the 'fragile' or the 'state' in the label – the first usually encompasses the latter, but not necessarily. I will start by the 'softer' kind of the latter and finish with what seems to be the most complete version of the former.[98] Many of them can generally be linked to postcolonialism theory in International Relations, and some of the 'softer' versions are closely linked to (post)development studies.[99] I do not explore the in-depths of either theory or their various general propositions, as this would go much beyond the scope of this thesis. More in tandem with the specific discussion on classification that will be explored in the following section, I look at the contributions some of these approaches bring to the debate on 'fragile

[97] Hill 2005, p. 139. See also Bilgin and Morton 2002, p. 56.

[98] Critiques that try to refine the label in terms of degrees or stages without actually engaging in deep questioning of the politics of classification or the given character of Western standards imposed are not dealt with in this section. They were diffusely mentioned in the previous section, as they can be seen as more focused on improving policy-making than on providing a political and theoretical critique to the power-knowledge relation the classification of postcolonial states might invite.

[99] See the excellent comparison developed in Sylvester 1999. 'Given the emphasis on local resistance, considerable faith in *postdevelopment* circles is placed in liaising with and learning from grassroots social movements.' (p. 710). My emphasis.

states' and how they dialogue with the theoretical and epistemological insights I explore in this research.

The critiques to the 'state' in the 'fragile state' label generally converge towards questioning the 'exportation' of a Western model of statehood and the attempt at implementing this particular idea of state in postcolonial political orders. This idea of state is not necessarily criticised in itself, but the perceived highly problematic project of turning it into in a universal solution. Certain approaches simply aim to remind the development industry that non-state actors can play crucial roles in promoting national stability and peace, and they also highlight the importance of considering alternative forms of intervention that are not centred solely in the state. Hagmann and Hoehne, for example, focus on the case of Somalia to argue for an analysis of the 'empirical emanations of statehood within and beyond the nation-state that emerge after or during the state collapse'.[100] They defend that 'failed states'[101] be seen as a 'global embedded phenomenon', and therefore argue that current practices of statebuilding based on an ideal-typical nation-state model that ignore both local idiosyncrasies and global dynamics will not work. Instead, they support Herbst's proposition that subnational units, as the 'relatively stable' Somaliland, be recognised by the international community.[102]

Similarly, a publication by the German Berghof Research Centre argues for the substitution of the 'fragile states' label by 'hybrid political orders', allowing for new forms of governance to emerge, in a proposed novel approach to statebuilding that recognises 'embedded' societal structures.[103] Generally articulated, this type of critique does not necessarily challenge the idea of a modern 'state' but its universalisation as a project: 'The point is not that this project did not work anywhere, but that it did not, and could not be expected to, work everywhere'.[104] This approach provides an important critique to models of statebuilding that take for granted what should be constructed and how. It also gives due relevance to the consequences of the Western bias towards a given understanding of what

[100] Hagmann and Hoehne 2010, pp. 49, 53.
[101] Their critique is directed to the assumed ideal type of a state in all labels – failed, fragile, collapsed, weak, therefore, the authors use these without differentiation throughout the article.
[102] Ibid., p. 54.
[103] Fischer and Schmelzle 2009, p. 31.
[104] Clapham 2000, pp. 6-7.

a state is or should be.[105] It belongs, however, more to the realm of problem-solving approaches, or (post)development studies, in contrast with other critiques.

In fact, another move in the critique to the labellisation of postcolonial states not only questions the universality of such Western model of statehood in terms of *feasibility*, but also aims to demonstrate that even its implementation in the West can be questioned if historical contingencies are taken into account. A key instance of such approach can be found in Grovogui's article *Regimes of Sovereignty*, which makes use of historicisation to delegitimise the idea of the modern state as the sole model of statehood, and consequentially, to question the ethics and morality of the current regime of sovereignty. Grovogui discusses the examples of Belgium and Switzerland, which became states by the force of circumstances and with the support of more powerful neighbours, who aimed at stabilising the European political landscape. He argues that a homogeneous system of independent sovereign states has never truly existed, but only the project to promote and sustain it. Grovogui accuses what he calls the 'Westphalian commonsense' of effecting an economy of knowledge that is, until today, fundamentally harmful to African or 'failed states':

> Instead of treating the African condition as evidence that undermines the empirical thesis of a uniform international morality, theorists often construe deviations from the Western state model as a sign of the inability of African states to live up to the requirements of sovereignty.[106]

Against the example of peacefully conceded sovereignty to Belgium and Switzerland, Grovogui places the 'historical coordinates of sovereignty' instituted by the West in Africa. This 'regime' would have contributed to 'fail' African states by constantly undermining their sovereignty through the 'intrusion' of financial mechanisms, economic marginalisation and 'other neoliberal orthodoxies'.[107] Therefore, according to the author, not only is the Westphalian system of sovereign states not a historical and teleological truth, but it has contributed to form a common knowledge and a view of international reality that actually undermined/s the sovereignty of

[105] For more examples, see Hameiri 2007; Jung 2008.
[106] Grovogui 2002, p. 316.
[107] Ibid., pp. 316, 335.

postcolonial states to the point of 'failure'. Grovogui does not negotiate with the labels or propose solutions; he limits his analysis to questioning the common sense about statehood in which the classification is based and the lack of accountability of the West for what he sees as the products of its constant intervention.

The argument on history and contingency is vastly used by critics of the classification of postcolonial states, and mainly by those who focus on the 'fragile' as much as on the 'state' in the label. Differently from Grovogui, however, some scholars tend to directly engage with the labels in order to question and finally dismiss them, the politically sceptical approach I mentioned in the Introduction.[108] 'Politically', because these approaches are openly engaged with a project of profound resistance and reform; 'sceptical', because they dismiss all alleged 'good' in the relation between the West and 'fragile states'. Some of them are self-labelled postcolonialist in theory, but their insights are not peculiar to this stream of thought;[109] hence, again, my adoption of a general and loose nomenclature and a focus on specific contributions.

In his critique of the '"failed states" thesis', Hill questions what he sees as a dichotomist approach based on a 'universal standard of what constitutes a successful state', and argues that the literature elaborated along these lines makes it impossible to contextualise individual paths of development.[110] He concludes by advocating the complete dismissal of labels 'such as weak state, quasi state, failed state and collapsed state', as a response to what he perceives to be the constant representation of postcolonial states as the 'deviant Other'.[111]

Gruffydd Jones, in turn, argues there is a need to go beyond and develop an alternative analytical framework that can contribute with the 'challenge of explanatory critique.'[112] She seeks to substitute the 'unhelpful

[108] Although most of these critiques draw insights from or are grounded in postcolonial studies, I avoid using this nomenclature so as not to bring general theoretical divisions to a specific debate. I believe this can be done, as long as I keep the coherence of the important insights from post-colonialism presented here.
[109] Critical scholars more closely connected with practices on the ground have also often reached similar conclusions about the power of labels and their basis in historical and contingent processes. See, for example, Observatoire de l`Afrique August 2008. Other scholars have the same theoretical and critical approach but do not necessarily subscribe to postcolonialism theory. See, for example, Nay 2013.
[110] Hill 2005, p. 148.
[111] Ibid., p. 151.
[112] Jones 2008, p. 182.

generalization' offered by indices for an approach informed by global political economy, drawing 'attention to the interaction between local and global social forces and processes, understood in their historical specificity.'[113] Gruffydd Jones argues the label 'failed states', 'with its hierarchy of categories – "weak", "fragile", "failed", "collapsed" – legitimises intervention by identifying lack, inferiority and incapacity.'[114] The author is, thus, incisive about the need to dismiss the label(s). She argues the label is used in an imperialist justification for intervention precisely by generating rich adjective descriptions with no explanatory character, hence, producing an amnesia regarding the way imperialist endeavours contributed to 'failing' such states in the first place. The alternative analytical framework, however, does not move much beyond a historicisation of these conditions, as the proposed dismissal of the label(s) is anchored in a critique to an overarching imperialist power and political economy.

Bilgin and Morton follow similar lines. Nevertheless, by grounding the 'imperialist power' on specific institutional changes and practices, they offer what is perhaps the most complete critique of the labels among those discussed here. The authors problematise the power-knowledge relation in which the labels are embedded by tracing the debate back to the institutional moves that led to what they call 'the annexation of the social sciences'. Those moves, according to Bilgin and Morton, were based on thinking and practice that were rooted in the Cold War dynamics and contributed to a dissociation that still endures between society and state and between Political Economy and Security Studies. The authors suggest still that security has inherited a narrow and extremely militaristic approach, an approach also extremely centred on the state – what they call 'statolatry'.[115] Furthermore, they argue that the division between Political Economy and Security Studies makes the discussion on 'state failure' blind to the political economy that made a Western liberal 'zone of peace' possible, while also creating a realist 'zone of conflict' in postcolonial states.[116] Moreover, Bilgin and Morton suggest that the solutions being

[113] Ibid., p. 183.
[114] Ibid., 198.
[115] Ibid., p. 71.
[116] Bilgin and Morton 2002, p. 68.

proposed to deal with 'failed states'[117] lack a contextualised understanding of the local state/society relations, separating these realms when the relation between them, it is argued, is precisely what accounts for the specificities of these political orders. The critique concludes with a proposal to dismiss the labels and to think of 'failed states' in terms of 'historical blocs', inspired by Gramsci's work and seen as essential to present an 'alternative to the construction of failed states as political practice'.[118]

Therefore, Bilgin and Morton go one step further by presenting their view on how the social sciences have come to be successful in the creation of the figure of 'fragile states', reflecting on institutional moves and processes. They also offer an alternative approach with more specific elements in which critics can base their work, but as such these propositions are limited to a dialogue with academics, not really engaging with how the labels are practiced, and thus how the process of dismissal would work for actors themselves.

Nonetheless, later, in 2008, Bilgin made an important indirect contribution to expand this dialogue, by proposing the use of Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry' to think of the 'Other' as often 'similar, but not quite the same' as the 'West'.[119] Her contribution is in extending this notion to criticise studies of difference that fail to see that similarities should raise interesting questions themselves, both in terms of the forces that lead to the need to mimic and in terms of the possibilities this can generate to disrupt authority, not least by breaking the clear-cut distinction between 'West' and 'non-West':

> One advantage to this approach is that it permits recognition of the agency and agenda of 'non-Western' actors in adopting, adapting or bypassing 'Western' ways of thinking about and doing world politics. The point is that 'non-Western' resistance and/or 'difference' may take many forms – including a search for 'similarity'.[120]

The argument in favour of exploring why these similarities are developed and what possibilities they hold for challenging authority contributes for a debate beyond academia, exactly by problematising the

[117] As mentioned before, for the purposes of their critique, the authors also deal with the labels indiscriminately.
[118] Ibid., p. 75.
[119] Bilgin 2008, p. 14.
[120] Ibid.

practical constraints and pressures actors endure. There is, however, a constant reference to an implicit agency of the 'West', as a homogeneous collective, that I strongly propose to avoid, as the remainder of this section explains.

3. PRACTICAL PRESSURES: THE ROLE OF PRACTICES

The approach of this research is to emphasise precisely that aspect of a *blurred relation between 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'*, but without the tendency that so often creeps in along with such approaches to presume collective intentions of one kind of another.[121] Also part of this blurred relation is the important insight on the *price of disengagement*, which I argue should not be side-lined in a meta-narrative of the relations between 'West' and 'non-West', but instead should be at the very core of the research. In fact, here I follow Sylvester's critique to some postcolonial approaches, and suggest that, although perhaps uniquely rich in their dedicated attention to the history of domination that underpins current relations with 'fragile states', there is a need to approach such relations through a practical lens, one that takes into account that there exist very concrete and immediate needs in so-called fragile states and, thus, a need to find practical ways to deal with them while taking into account the important discussion on power relations: '[P]ostcolonial studies does not tend to concern itself with whether the subaltern is eating.'[122] Although a rather harsh critique, it has a point in that (unbalanced) *engagement* is quite often the only available move. In that spirit, I focus precisely on the elements that make 'similarity' or engagement in (pre-)established terms so necessary and strongly imposed, but I analyse this imposition as residing in the *practical* features of such elements rather than in an epistemologically privileged access to collective intentions.

In asking '*What practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?*', I establish the aim of understanding how 'fragile states' become a political reality, and very importantly, my phrasing is not an attempt to

[121] Even when not expressed as such in more nuanced readings, the notion seems to creep in through constructions such as 'If the world has remained oblivious to such interconnections, this is partly because *the "West" has usurped* not only the material resources of the "non-West" but also its image of itself as a subject, as opposed to a mere object, of history.' (Bilgin 2008, p. 7). My emphasis.
[122] Sylvester 1999, p. 703.

narrow down the object of research towards ‘practices’ but a declaration of my theoretical inclination. The history of quantification and classification presented in this chapter and the brief discussion about the way critics approach the ‘fragile states’ agenda had the purpose of bringing to the fore the role of *practices* of quantification and classification themselves. I take the critique I offered above, on the practical impositions of ‘similarity’, or simply ‘engagement’ (which here implies adopting certain practices), as point of departure to discuss my own approach to the ‘fragile states’ agenda. In the chapter that follows, I detail the many components of my research question, making the way I propose to answer it necessarily connected to the answers I suggest.

CHAPTER TWO

THINKING AND DOING QUANTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION: STYLE, PRACTICAL SENSE AND SYMBOLIC POWER

The 'construction of fragile states as political practice' is undoubtedly powerful in its consequences and unbalanced in the 'causes' and problems it highlights. In emphasising these issues, critical scholars indeed bring to the fore extremely important discussions on the power*ful* relations involved in the classification of 'fragile states'. However, the labelling of the 'deviant Other' should raise questions that go beyond the label itself, or the knowledge that leads to this formulation, to how this knowledge becomes so widespread it turns into a common sense. In the case of the classification of 'fragile states', sociologies of quantification can provide important insights.

In general, labels are used because they are practical. 'Practical taxonomies',[1] including the overarching one between 'West' and 'non-West' in academic discourse, become current when they can be used, mobilised, when they help explaining or summarising phenomena. In that sense, taxonomies need to approach people's perception of the world to be of any use:[2]

> [T]echnical classifications grow out of and have to answer to our common sense, *socially comfortable classifications*. It just would not be socially

[1] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 73.
[2] Ibid., p. 135.

> feasible to call a donkey a fish, no matter how good your scientific grounds.[3]

Thus, the labelling is undoubtedly powerful, but how so? How is it that the classification of 'fragile states' becomes 'socially comfortable'? These questions are largely side-lined in discussions that overwhelmingly privilege the work of collective intentions over practices, subsuming actors into homogenised assumed blocs. Here, however, practices are placed at the very centre of the research. An understanding of how self-labelling becomes possible needs to be accompanied by an account of how powerfully practical the labelling is.

In the following section, I briefly introduce the main theoretical bases of the approach I propose. In the second section, this approach is discussed along three sub-sections: I first look at the quantifying and classifying practices as part of a broader reasoning, a *style of thinking and doing* that authenticates itself through constant improvement in use. Subsequently, I focus on the *practical sense* amid which quantifying and classifying practices take place and what this notion means in terms of the critique to the critics I propose. The idea of practical sense is advanced as an antidote to intentions-based approaches that are so often presented as the only counter-move to mainstream views on 'fragile states'. The third sub-section gathers the idea of a style of thinking and doing and the notion of practical sense to think of power in the 'fragile states' agenda. I suggest Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic power* provides the necessary nuances to the debate, opening space to considering and analysing the possibilities of weakening and change of this power. Combined, these three sub-sections, on style, practical sense and symbolic power, offer the detailed hypotheses of this thesis, presented together in the third section. Finally, the fourth and last section discusses the methodological bases of this research.

1. THE PROBLEM OF ASSUMED HOMOGENEOUS COLLECTIVE INTENTIONS AND PRE-ESTABLISHED OPPRESSION

There is no questioning the political character of classifications such as 'fragile states' and the political negotiations that go into the process

[3] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 67. My emphasis.

whereby they become common currency. Indeed, this research agrees with the many previous analyses on the power of classifications: They are powerful bureaucratic mechanisms whose elaboration is profoundly political, since their contingency, lack of situatedness and blindness to residual categories have important effects of power and subtle exclusion.[4]

Notwithstanding these important critiques, this thesis deals with the power in the classification of 'fragile states' as a *question,* not a given answer. I approach this question in terms of *how* power is exerted, which should shed light on the *forms of power* involved. As seen in the previous chapter, many scholars examine how the labels and the tools to achieve them become a useful common sense by hypothesising homogeneous intentions and motivations of a collective sort: the '*the West* wants, plans, aims to' in what I called politically sceptical approaches. These approaches often depict a rather consequentialist understanding of interests and a privileged epistemology of intentions: Power is understood as accumulated resources and automatically linked to a general intention to 'oppress'. I take issues with the 'intentions' and the 'oppress'. In the following, I dismiss the first and open up the second by asking *who* is involved in the politics of labelling 'fragile states' and *how*.

This research argues that looking for a 'why' in the context of this debate is to ask the wrong question; and looking for 'why' with one homogeneous oppressor and one homogeneous oppressed in mind is to skew the question so that the very place and moment of politics are killed in anticipation. In fact, politically sceptical approaches generate a dangerous paradox: No room is left for the 'oppressed' to act, as any action in that sense is either merely pre-absorbed by the critique as potential non-reflexive cooperation with the 'oppressors' *caused* by Western education, or dismissed as the utilitarian move of predatory elites who are not representative of their population. I argue instead that if the practices of classification are powerfully influential, those very practices should be the object of research. In the remainder of this chapter, I develop these critiques and the theoretical and methodological insights that provide the bases of my own approach.

[4] Bourdieu 1990a, pp. 123-137; Bowker and Star 2000, pp. 319-326; Espeland and Stevens 2008; Davis, Kingsbury et al. 2012. Residual categories are the 'other' in classification systems, the un-allocated categories. See Bowker and Star 2000, p. 325.

2. QUESTIONS OF CLASSIFICATION, PRACTICES OF 'FRAGILISATION' AND POWER: THE KEY TARGETS

In this section, I discuss my signposts or hypotheses in this research, that is, *how* I combine considerations regarding incontestable human misery, ubiquitous practical-but-dangerous quantification of complex political problems and the important insights of critics regarding the truly powerful negative impacts of labellisation. This section mixes epistemological and theoretical questions with the substantive issues raised by this configuration. In fact, I call the ideas in the following sub-sections signposts *or* hypotheses because the answers I suggest cannot be dissociated from *how* I propose to answer my research question. Borrowing Hacking's analytical prompt, 'it is best to avoid sweeping generalities and get down to discussable details'.[5]

2.1. UNCONTESTED HUMAN MISERY MEETS CONTESTED SOLUTIONS: QUANTIFIED CLASSIFICATION AS STYLE OF THINKING & DOING

There is currently a seemly incompatibility of focus between concerns over solving the problems in 'fragile states' and concerns over how the negative impacts of these very solutions reflect an overarching Western domination – respectively, the problem-solving and politically sceptical approaches. How to maintain the important human aspect of the debate without losing sight of the powerful impacts of the 'fragile states' labellisation? As seen, some critics argue for the dismissal of all labels that imply a 'deviant Otherness' and a Western standard of statehood. Practitioners and problem-solving authors, however, constantly work to supposedly refine the fragile state label and its measurement exactly with the stated aim of reducing such negative impacts. Therefore, I suggest a key to addressing the above question is in looking at what connects the human misery identified in 'fragile states' and the perceived problematic framework of solutions the label encourages, that is, the point where problem-solving and politically sceptical approaches intersect and disperse, the (*quantified) practices of classification*.

[5] Hacking 2012, p. 608. On the importance of the details of actors' practices, see also Bigo 2011.

Overall, politically sceptical approaches go only as far as saying the constant measuring does not help to produce an encouraging picture of countries that are struggling to find support – a vicious cycle many, including practitioners, argue should not be undermined.[6] 'Fragile states', they would say, are obviously not strengthened by 'fragilisation' practices. Indices of 'state fragility' have direct influence over the allocation of resources for many aid organisations and might also guide investments made by private companies. In addition, the quantified data reproduced in rankings and other classification schemes is used by citizens to hold their governments accountable but are often produced elsewhere and not necessarily updated. Also, the very fact that the 'fragile states' might be unable to produce such data independently (if there is such a way)[7] may divert investors and partners to look for other sources of information, leaving 'fragile states' with little room for the establishment of goals and priorities. Moreover, a great part of this quantified classification is fed by and feeds other indirect – but not less important – practices of categorisation: The monitoring, evaluation and advising provided by donor agencies to 'fragile states' are by rule followed by increasingly quantified reports that take stock of 'risks' and results, and these practices depend on the same sort of exercises to establish targets and plans of action. The departure point for all these practices is data collection, often executed by mixed international and national teams in blurred processes of analysis and aggregation.[8] In this sense, the unbalance in skills among actors involved is always a central factor when discussing the appropriateness of both exercise and result.

These examples do not even begin to approach the complexity of discussions on ownership and state capacity, but provide a good idea of what critics to the quantified – or excessively quantified – classification of 'fragile states' have to say. With all possible impacts envisaged and concretised, numbers are frequently pointed as arbitrary, mistaken in many

[6] See Leigh 2 July 2012; and Observatoire de l`Afrique August 2008.
[7] Rocha de Siqueira 2014.
[8] Ibid.

levels, incomplete or deliberately biased.[9] Yet, the quantified practices of classification have multiplied and expanded in exercises of constant improvement in use, expressed, for instance, in the many recent initiatives offering massive open data about countries' performance.[10] In the case of 'state fragility', the perceived inaccuracies and political problems inherent in the statistics do not halt the quest for classification, as one could expect, but actually encourage an ongoing work aimed at improvement and refinement. This approach to 'fragile states' is loosely interpreted by some scholars as a practice of governance by indicators,[11] for its focus on technology and the opportunities it generates to produce and execute policy from a distance.

The quantification of political issues is indeed intensifying and the level of supervision it allows is increasingly seen as both objectively desirable and politically problematic. Nevertheless, I suggest these practices of quantified classification go much beyond the technology needed for such analyses and the ubiquity of indicators in policy-making. They reflect as diverse factors as the agencies' need to adapt to perceived new problems in international politics, as well as professionals' struggles to adapt to a now much disputed job market, the need to adjust concrete approaches that had not previously shown adequate results and, not least, a perhaps increasing exchange with labelled-countries' offices, much reflected by and in the recent dynamic of self-labellisation by 'fragile states', as discussed ahead.

I propose to see this layered urge to classify and measure 'fragile states' as a *style of thinking and doing* political management of 'fragile states', borrowing Hacking's term for a specific form of enquiring the world.[12] Hacking is inspired by Crombie's six styles of scientific enquiry, of which two are 'ordering of variety by comparison and taxonomy' and 'statistical analysis of regularities of populations and the calculus of probabilities'.[13] A combination of these seems to be exactly what the

[9] See, for example, Alexander 2010; Kararach, Kedir et al. December 2012; Grävingholt, Ziaja et al. 2012.
[10] The World Bank's Open Data Initiative being a recent example. See World Bank, Data Catalog. See also OECD, Open Government Data. This issue is discussed in detail in the next chapters.
[11] Davis, Kingsbury et al. 2012; Davis, Fisher et al. 2012. See also Bhuta 2012.
[12] Hacking 2012.
[13] Hacking 1992, p. 132.

political management of 'fragile states' has so far mobilised in the form of a measured taxonomy of statehood. Styles are not used because they are good; in Hacking's words, '[t]hey are what we use' and, therefore, '[t]hey become our standards for good reason'.[14] Critics, or rather, political sceptics, ignore this dimension at their peril.

As numbers or 'numerical claims' are reproduced and reworked, they 'hold'; they become a bureaucratic routine as much as a reality.[15] The quantification of aspects of 'state fragility' is at the heart of practices of classification and can only be considered of practical use if based on the perceived urge to have a classificatory grid – the method of the style and the style reinforce each other. In order to classify 'fragile states', one encodes aspects of 'state fragility', develops indicators through an extreme political process of commensurability and finally measure, compare and rank.[16]

These quantified practices of classification obey an increasing technological proficiency. Nevertheless, actors are *drawn* to the tantalising project of measuring the world as much as they *construct* this style of thinking & doing themselves. The more entrenched the practices, the stronger claim to truth their objects of enquiry can hold, which in turn reinforces the role of the practices as producers or conduits of true knowledge. Thus, quantified practices of classification make use of available technologies and foment their development in the same way they measure objects that they help to create. In Hacking's view, these objects might never have existed in their form if the classificatory construction had not taken place.[17] Although intense human misery is common to so many countries named 'fragile', the encoding of this human misery into a category of 'fragile state', the commensurability of state capacity and willingness to

[14] Hacking 2012, p. 601.
[15] See 'numerical claims' in Lampland 2009, p. 1. I use 'hold' in the sense Desrosières uses the term, as in a model that finds its place and becomes a link between descriptive and prescriptive dimensions, connecting knowledge and action by being able to convey separate images of the moment of objectification and the moment of action or decision. Moreover, things 'hold' when they become of such practical use that any dismissals would 'prohibit any form of action in the world'(see Desrosières 1998, pp. 9, 11). On the issue of how statistics can be real and conventional, see Desrosières 2009. See also, Hacking 17 Aug 2006.
[16] On encoding, see Desrosières 1998. 'Commensuration transforms qualities into quantities, difference into magnitude. It is a way to reduce and simplify disparate information into numbers that can easily be compared' (Espeland and Stevens 1998, p. 316). On standards, see Lampland and Star 2009, ch. 1. On classification, see Bowker and Star 2000.
[17] Hacking 17 Aug 2006.

tackle this misery and the following classification of 'fragile states' based on manageable elements and processes – taxation, education, financial infra-structure, among so many others – have created a 'state fragility' reality that albeit 'apace with contingent events', is stable enough to mobilise a huge bureaucratic machine and to exercise powerful effects on 'classified' *and* 'classifiers'. Indeed, if objects are measured, someone has to measure them - and do it well. This aspect will be discussed ahead.[18]

What is interesting in looking at these practices of classification, therefore, is that the power to hold in place among other possible styles is drawn precisely from the style itself. A style of thinking & doing, according to Hacking, is self-authenticating: 'The style does not answer to some external canon of truth independent of itself'; it has no foundations. A style of thinking & doing is one which '*works*'.[19] Hacking admittedly sees circularity in that, but this is welcome: 'The truth is what we find out in such and such a way. We recognize it as truth because of how we find it out. And how do we know that the method is good? Because it gets at the truth.'[20] Hacking has never been keen to subscribe to any correspondence theory of truth and thought of 'truth' as an elevator word that complicates discussion rather than elucidating analysis.[21] The circularity in 'truth' is instead better approached by a look at the style of thinking & doing.

All in all, a style, in my own view, is a work of practical fine-tuning: Existent methods and technologies gradually become efficient in producing and reproducing the objects they seek to think about and act upon, and can only hold while method and object hang together, through a constant work of thinking and doing. This, however, is not as much a conscious attempt to sustain a perceived artificial view of the world as such, as a response to a reality one helped to create, and this is where this approach contributes to an essential departure from the main critiques explored in the previous chapter.

[18] This general reasoning is borrowed from Hacking 2012, p. 604, in his discussion about crystallisation. I draw inspiration from Porter in the specific insight on how numbers say something not only about the researched but also about the researchers, in Porter 1995, pp. 10, 23. This is at the core of the symbolic power I discuss in chapter six.
[19] Hacking 2012, p. 605.
[20] Hacking 1992, p. 135.
[21] See Hacking 1999, p. 43; Hacking 2007, p. 38.

In his elaboration, Hacking cites Bourdieu's idea of reason as historic and William's concept of truthfulness.[22] In brief, Bourdieu's notion of reason is necessarily historical because it is based on the author's theory of practice, which places reason (not rationality, which is dismissed) in a configuration that intrinsically relies on the objective conditions of the world as much as on individual trajectories and positions.[23] Accordingly, objectivity is in fact the character of a certain social order that is *self-evident* because it is engaged with through schemes of perception and appreciation that emerged from precisely that social order.[24]

The *ways of finding out* about things of the world, therefore, are based on kinds of reasons that are peculiar to these styles.[25] Each style of thinking & doing has its own methods of finding out, based on *a* form of reason (not necessarily unique to it), and also very importantly, it produces its own objects, by defining objects of enquiry that are candidates to truth. The issue, thus, is not in determining if the enquiries find the truth about their object, but how these styles of thinking & doing produce a form of truth-telling or *truthfulness* that holds, that is, how they become self-authenticated.[26] Hacking's answer is pragmatic: Styles answer to pragmatic standards only, with no external canons.[27] Styles that enquiry into 'interactive kinds' have the capacity to produce what Hacking, in his 'dynamic nominalism', calls 'looping effect'.[28] In my view, this is similar to Bourdieu's notion of 'theory effect', fundamentally a summoning to which there tends to be some movement as an answer: The classified object becomes or rejects what it is summoned to be *but it can hardly disengage* once the theory or style of thinking & doing has successfully established the accepted candidates to truth.[29] The more successful the style, the more pressure on objects and groups to assume or refute categorisation, hence, the stronger the style's truthfulness.

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[22] Hacking 2012, p. 605.
[23] See Bourdieu 1990b.
[24] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 135. See also, Bourdieu 1996, p. 111.
[25] Or the *genres of enquiry*, both alternative conceptualisations proosed by Hacking himself. Ibid., p. 601.
[26] Ibid. Hacking is inspired by Bernard Williams in its use of truthfulness and truth-telling, in Williams 2002. *In* I. Hacking, "Language, Truth and Reason' 30 years later', Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 43: (2012), p. 605
[27] Ibid.
[28] Hacking 1999, p. 42.
[29] Ibid., pp. 44, 69, 114. See also Hacking 17 Aug 2006, p. 23. On Bourdieu's theory effect, see Bourdieu 2001a, pp. 194-197.

Kauppi and Erkkilã, inspired by the notion of theory effect, provide an excellent example of such forces in an analysis of the indices on Higher Education in Europe:

> [F]or institutions of higher education to simply ignore these neo-liberal models, their managerial instruments, the philosophy of publish or perish, the threat to national sovereignty and society they represent, and more broadly the structural forces in motion can be disastrous.[30]

After this observation, they proceed to enumerate the many possible disasters disengagement would generate, ranging from loss of funding to the inability of attracting good students and the damaging of reputation that goes along all these consequences. The reasoning could not be more connected to the one I propose here. The idea of a self-authenticating style of thinking & doing helps exactly to illustrate the *price of disengagement*, the damaging gap in politically sceptical approaches.

The notion of style, thus, is a promising and rich way of approaching recent events in the topic of 'fragile states'. Largely ignored in major critiques, the quantified practices of classifying 'state fragility' and the relatively recent foundation of a self-labelled group of 'fragile states', the g7+, virtually scream to be connected under this highly insightful umbrella term of style of thinking & doing – in this case, I would say, *thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'*. This style, in constant work of refinement, seems extremely competent in creating a general need to classify 'fragile states' to the extent that a relatively successfully vocal self-labelled group contributes to making the dismissal of the label if not a non-issue, at least one that is embedded in such entrenched practices of quantification and classification that one cannot dissociate the method from the object of enquiry.

Indeed, as states are classified according to 'degrees of fragility', a multiple 'ontological slippage' seems to shift the focus to the adjectivation rather than the 'truthfulness' of 'state fragility' itself, indicating the power of social and practical taxonomies Bourdieu describes.[31] Assumed and naturalised, this qualified and quantified existence becomes 'real in its

[30] Kauppi and Erkkilã 2011, p. 324.
[31] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 55.

consequences'.[32] Fragile states' thereby become a reality of international politics without ceasing to be a scientific and political construction.

Considering this power in use, the most analytically interesting aspect of the style is, thus, the fact that the pragmatic standards through which a style is judged are not founded on any external explanation, be it homogeneous collective intentions or the 'reality' of 'fragile states'. The quantified classification and management of 'fragile states' is not widespread because it reflects a 'truth' about what a 'fragile state' is, because moral and ethical considerations make this style of thinking & doing legitimate, or, as discussed ahead, because it is driven by a conscious programmatic move to create artificiality. The style is successful because it works in the historically and epistemologically well-rooted context of the quantifying and classifying practices in which it is embedded.

It is necessary to highlight, however, that I approach this 'work' in a slightly different version from the one provided by Hacking. For the author, 'work' is related to results that were intended or that are of 'our liking'.[33] I suggest that the 'work' is rather a judgement regarding what is of 'our liking', and that the 'intended results' bit of his notion is clearly not a useful approach in this research. Hacking's work is generally directed at medical and 'hard-science' issues, where, without going into important though here unnecessary philosophical debates, the 'intended' part might be differently understood. Different from hard sciences experiments, in the specific case of practices that classify 'fragile states', quantification is central and is done in such a global, diffuse and intense way that numbers are hardly traceable or attributable.[34] Hence, verifying that results follow intentions is an epistemological dead-end. On the other hand, the judgment of style according to results of 'our liking', although seemly vague, can be actually an analytically rich way of looking at this style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', as long as the focus is on 'practical liking', or perhaps, to use a better phrase borrowed from Bowker and Star, what is '*socially comfortable*'.[35]

[32] Thomas and Thomas 1970 [1917] cited in Bowker and Star 2000, p. 53. This is, of course, a pragmatic argument. For a short but interesting debate on pragmatism that is very much related to the insights presented here, see Hacking 2007.
[33] Hacking 2012, p. 605.
[34] Rocha de Siqueira 2014.
[35] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 67

In general, one can say we like what we are practically used to: Practitioners that compile statistics on 'fragile states' like statistics; active-on-the-ground practitioners like to think they make a difference and, therefore, like easily observed results; directors with little time like reports that go straight to the point and facilitate decision-making. The argument easily goes on. However, to be fruitful, this approach to the success of the style needs to be grounded on the piece of 'liking' I have access to, that is, the *practices* of actors that work in classifying 'fragile states'. The socially comfortable, after all, is what we accept to do, encourage others to do, do ourselves and learn how to do better by doing.

THE FIRST SIGNPOST

This sub-section discussed the first of three important signposts or hypotheses in this research: In trying to answer to 'what practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?', I suggest the key is in *quantified* classification as a crucial set of practices and as a central method of enquiry towards 'state fragility'. This, in turn, is established by what I suggest is a style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'.[36] I see the label itself as in a 'matrix', as Hacking says, composed of actors and practices; hence, my hypothesis considers this matrix is constituted and mobilised by a style, in such a way that judging the possibility of succeeding or vanquishing the labelling cannot be dissociated from an analysis of the style of thinking & doing in which the classification is embedded. Based on this understanding of style of thinking & doing, success can be judged only by pragmatic standards, which, as I suggested, are centred on 'our liking', or what is 'socially comfortable'. The socially comfortable, I believe, is best expressed in actors' very *practices*, what they entail and enable, and their accompanying practical sense, which leads to my second signpost or hypothesis.

[36] A caveat is important: I do not assume this style of thinking & doing is uniquely applied to the case of 'fragile states'. Differently, I suggest the management of 'fragile states' is done through such style.

I suggest here that to understand the powerful implications of classifications of 'fragile states', to question their assumptions and to propose improvements or dismissals, there is no need to resort to an analysis of *homogeneous collective intentions* (henceforth, 'collective intentions'). As discussed above, such analysis would present an epistemologically dead-end, because the numbers generated in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' are hardly traceable or attributable and, at the same time, are crucial in the classification of 'fragile states'.[37] In fact, I suggest most approaches that seems to offer an epistemologically privileged access to collective intentions do so precisely because they ignore the very quantified practices that make currently classification possible and, therefore, the crucial difficulty or even impossibility of attributing authorship to certain categorisations, much less the intentions in such presumed authoring. Such approaches privilege an assumed 'thinking' over the 'doing', crucial to the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'; they in fact tend to offer only an arbitrary and strictly structural, even if appealing, form of 'thinking'. This thinking is seen as dissociated from internal struggles, specific constraints and constant internal negotiation, annihilating human beings and (paradoxically) the structural constraints with which they live.

By focusing on strictly structural and ungrounded intentions of the kind 'the West seeks to', one ends up with either stated or hidden intentions. A critical approach to the first can lead to a rather utopian moral crusade against political motivations;[38] and a critical approach to the second, besides subsuming the issue of access, necessarily assumes the

[37] See Rocha de Siqueira 2014, which discusses precisely this untraceability of most numbers that classify 'fragile states' and of so many other cases of quantification, as sociologists argue. This is one of the reasons why Latour's 'associology' with a focus on tracing did not appeal to my analytical senses in this research, even though his insights on technology would be obviously applicable to many aspects of my approach to quantification here. See Latour 2005, p. 20.

[38] Indeed, it should be said, first and foremost, that in the 'fragile states' agenda, while many critics tend to assume or imply interests are hidden, many 'selfish' interests are actually much clearly stated. Most development agencies, in the US and Canada, for instance, clearly state they prioritise 'fragile states' that are of national interest and that match the agency's capacity, hence, are more guaranteed in offering results. Commercial interests are also generally stated. See, for example, USAID January 2005, p. 13, under 'Engaging strategically'; and Carment, Prest et al. 2006, table 3.

results (perfectly) *reflect* anterior intentions, and also implies these intentions do not need to be attributed – they are no one' and everyone's intentions, leaving also the analyst absolutely unaccountable. Furthermore, there is usually a reliance on powerful deductions to assume a rather unilateral, one-dimensional and arbitrary type of perfectly formulated strategic intention to dominate – the least sophisticated and nuanced of these approaches are frequently called 'conspiratory'. Not that these intentions are not plausible (individually), but to the methodological issue of access, a political one should be added: The problem is in that whatever good that is in the classification of 'fragile states', considering the misery at stake, this is somehow eliminated from the debate. Change and contingency are paradoxically side-lined by what in many cases are meant to be approaches of resistance.

In that spirit, as indicated in the introduction to this chapter, I propose instead a focus on *how* classifications of 'fragile states' take place. In that *how*, a look at the *practices* is central, and that is the main argument of this section. My second signpost or hypothesis proposes to link quantifying and classifying practices to 'practical sense' and, thus, to avoid the pitfalls of collective intentions. First, however, I discuss two rich (*collective*) *intentions-based* approaches that I believe help to illustrate in details the importance of the move I propose.

INTENTION-BASED APPROACHES

Some intention-based approaches are seen as strong critiques to the Western practices towards 'state fragility' and, as such, of relevance to question the implications of the style of thinking & doing just discussed. However, they are also importantly limited themselves by their focus on *homogeneous collective* intentions. I would like to discuss two of them, both politically sceptical somehow but in very different ways: The first focuses on a said Western will to control and, mainly, to contain; the second, focuses on statebuilding as a set of therapeutic techniques that seek to allow the West to evade responsibility and accountability for outcomes in 'fragile states', as a part of an exercise of 'empire in denial'. In both approaches, a project of power is first assumed and suggested, while evidence is provided

through examples of outcomes that supposedly contradict the official discourse on aid to 'fragile states'. This account of contradictions and the depiction of the negative consequences of intervention in 'fragile states' provide powerful insights and important discussion points. Nevertheless, they reach such disparate conclusions that questions can be raised towards their seemly privileged (in terms of both access and focus) epistemology of intentions: In a quasi-leap of faith and because the analyst's certainty of the nature of the intentions analysed is all that takes to conduct the research, the same kind of examples can serve as evidence even for opposite views on the intentions at play. I suggest that is because one can only analyse such intentions if assuming that the character of the results is *caused* by the character of the assumed intention – which, itself, only needs to answer to the analyst's certainty.

I discarded Hacking's view (part of it) of a style that works because it matches results and intentions precisely because I do not believe this tracing is possible in my study of the classification of 'fragile states', not when it implies attributing intentions to a whole and homogenous West and eliminating practitioners' work, as will be argued. This kind of approach seems to very unnaturally eliminate both the possibility of error and the unpredictability of quantifying practices – 'Actors plan, actors act, actors get the results sought', even less comprehensible in a diffusely quantified context. On the other hand, I follow the other part of Hacking's suggestion, that styles work because they are of 'our liking', or 'socially comfortable', as Bowker and Starr say. In that sense, arguments that propose the existence of collective intentions in fact do not address the issue of how the negative implications are made possible, through which practices, tools and techniques, that is, what means became comfortably established as the methods to address 'state fragility'. Logically, even if an individual intention is to be put into practice, there would need first to be, in any case, the means and people for executing it.

The first intentions-based approach I would like to discuss, developed by Duffield, is marked by the understanding that intervention of any sort in 'fragile states' represents the Western will to contain the circulation of non-desired people. Inspired by Foucault's notion of biopolitics, the author argues that the relation between 'failed' and 'fragile

states' as labels is not based on empirical measurements, rather 'the difference is practical, and concerns the *sense of priority* and *policy tools* with which the international community addresses "ungoverned" territory.'[39]

According to Duffield, there has been a re-conceptualisation of both security (underdevelopment becoming dangerous) and development (as including radical long-term goals, such as conflict resolution), which led to a security-development nexus and to the creation of a contingent and constantly negotiated sovereign frontier. This frontier, as the argument goes, is where Western actors intervene through 'occupation', attempting to contain spill-overs from what are seen as permanent emergencies, the 'fragile states'. According to Duffield, this notion of permanent emergency is essential to an international regulatory biopolitical regime that keeps underdevelopment at large.[40]Duffield's work has a few important points in common with my second case of intentions-based approach, David Chandler's analysis of statebuilding in 'fragile states'.[41]

Both Duffield and Chandler argue that sovereign frontiers have been blurred, with a constant presence of Western institutions within the governments of 'fragile states', which tends to make the sovereignty of 'fragile states' increasingly contingent. They also criticise, using different notions, the focus on self-reliance or ownership in which an idea of good enough governance is based. According to the authors, the notion of good enough governance applied to programmes in 'fragile states' dislocate responsibility for development to the very states being assisted.[42] However, the authors present very different reasons/intentions for these and related practices in the Western engagement with 'fragile states'. As seen, while Duffield identifies a liberal regulatory biopolitics that aims to exert power to control and contain underdevelopment, Chandler suggests instead that the engagement with 'fragile states' actually reflects a lack of (self-) interests, a post-Cold War 'anti-foreign policy' that seeks to deflect responsibility and accountability by superficially intervening to reconstruct 'fragile states' but only half-heartened (which in fact looks like an interest).[43]

[39] Duffield 2007, p. 160. My emphasis.
[40] Ibid., p. 15.
[41] Chandler 2006b; see also Chandler 2003, 2007.
[42] The idea of 'good enough governance' is discussed in chapter four.
[43] Ibid.

According to the author, the change in the acceptable forms of behaviour expected from the great powers has turned power into something to be hidden; almost an anti-realist movement in re-interpreting the world. In these new international relations, while the West is expected to reduce poverty and promote peace and development, the argument goes, it is considered unacceptable that Western self-interests are expressed or mobilised. Therefore, Chandler suggests, the statebuilding agenda becomes increasingly technical and apolitical, displacing national foreign policy interests and (purposefully, it seems) directing attention away from Western self-interests and capabilities:[44] 'In fact, the drive to extend these forms of regulation stems from the evasiveness brought about by the problems of legitimising power rather than the desire to exercise power more effectively.'[45] Hence, a completely different interpretation of 'Western intentions' from those presented by Duffield; not a ferocious exercise of power, but a meticulous avoidance of it.

Chandler in fact argues the exercise of Western power in a truly interested agenda of statebuilding might lead to more concrete development, as the politics in the self-interests would awake the accountability process: '[T]he *denial of power* is a dishonest, reactionary and elitist perspective which seeks to argue that power is not important and that there is not much that power can do'.[46] He argues, thus, *for* the exercise of power.

In these two intentions-based approaches to the topic of 'fragile states', it is interesting to note how they both depict collective intentions of 'the West' but very different ones, and they both make use of the same argument on the lack of efficient solutions from the West but with very diverse interpretations. For Duffield, the lack of true ownership is a testament to the will of the West to develop governance that is just good enough in 'fragile states' so as to contain non-insured life,[47] while for Chandler, the incongruence in practices of statebuilding that aim to allow for ownership by 'fragile states' indicates an absence of a proper foreign

[44] Ibid., p. 190.
[45] Ibid., p. 191.
[46] Chandler 2006b, p. 193. My emphasis.
[47] Ibid., p. 178.

policy, which would include clear self-interests and exercise of power.[48] Although analysing very similar cases and examples, both works provide very distinct views of the world: the West is manipulatively political and has a clear programme of action; or the West is lost in its use of power, lacks legitimacy to any social project and therefore (purposefully) opts out of politics and in for technical and bureaucratic assistance only.

It is important to analyse these studies exactly to show how analyses of the same practices and events around 'state fragility' can come to such discrepant conclusions. This is intrinsically linked to their focus on collective intentions as object of enquiry, making of this collective something absolutely independent of actors' practices, the 'sweeping generalities' to which Hacking refers.[49] I suggest the disparities in the interpretation of examples reflect the fruitlessness of tracing results to intentions in such macro-analyses. The focus on intentions is epistemologically futile because it leads to all answers, thus, to no answer at all. Moreover, if the aim is to discuss and reclaim politics, these hyperbolic analyses actually choose less helpful weapons to hit the target.

I suggest that if such intentions-based questions cannot be answered if not with multiple contradictory interpretations, we can attempt to answer *how* and have the important benefit of an analysis that, considering the negative impacts of such classifications, looks at how this impetus to quantify and classify sustains itself. This proposed *how*-approach is centred on a specific understanding of *practice* that is able to dismiss intentions while retaining the important aspect of self-authentication, hence opening space for a discussion about how practices that classify 'fragile states' become and remain powerful. Moreover, and in practical terms, by dismissing an ontological priority of intentions, the approach proposed looks to access impacts that were not sought, aims which show no related results, intentions that make no sense, and sense that follows no intentions, therefore, expanding the possibilities for an analysis of power, as will be discussed later on. Not only power is not side-lined in this approach, but it becomes possible to understand how it is practiced, thus, what contingencies and changes can be considered.

[48] Ibid., p. 50.
[49] Hacking 2012, p. 608. For a discussion, see Bigo 2011, pp. 231-238.

For this, the Bourdieusian concept of 'practical sense' is central, and it is at the core of my second signpost or hypotheses: *practices* can account for power without taking for granted what this power is, how it is exercised and by whom. Therefore, practices that classify 'fragile states' directly or indirectly offer a key site of research to understand both how the urge for classification is sustained and what powerful impacts it has in the case of 'state fragility'. I suggest practices of quantification are part of the 'doing' as much as of the 'thinking', not mere tools or employed technologies, but the very frame through which actors perceive 'state fragility' and, therefore, how 'fragile states' become a political reality. One does not reinforce or refute a label, but the style of thinking & doing that makes the labelling possible and is made possible by it. The issue, thus, is how practical the reinforcement or refutation can be.

PRACTICAL SENSE

The approach I propose to look at these practices fits within the broad 'practice turn' in social sciences, in that it is 'sufficiently psychological to avoid physical determinism [and] sufficiently nonpsychological to be embodied'.[50] Bourdieusian 'theory of practice' is valued for its relational reading of everything social: 'Against all forms of methodological monism that purport to assert the ontological priority of structure *or* agent, system *or* actor, the collective *or* the individual, Bourdieu affirms the *primacy of relations.*'[51] Actors' objectives positions are always seen in relation to other actors' positions, according to the compared volume and structure of capitals (economic, social, scientific and others), whilst the change in one's position influence the others'. In this understanding of the social, the 'primacy of relations' is crucial in providing the lens through which one can apprehend what guides practices: Practice, according to Bourdieu, is guided by the *habitus*, 'a feel for the game turned into second nature.'[52] The habitus is 'a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles';[53] hence, self-authenticating. It is a past

[50] Schatzki 2001, p. 8.
[51] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 15.
[52] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 63.
[53] Bourdieu 2008a, p. 82.

embodied in the form of categories of perception and dispositions.[54] In that way, I see habitus as much similar to Hacking's notion of style of thinking & doing, as Bourdieu himself hinted at. Indeed, here Hacking's dynamic nominalism and Bourdieu's structural constructivism richly speak to each other.[55]

Bourdieu spoke of the conditions of a disciplinary habitus, its methods and concepts, as being constitutive of a style, the unity of which is the mark of all products of the same habitus, an insight which he attributes to Hacking.[56] In the classification of 'fragile states', this style would include practices or methods of ordering/ranking and creating taxonomies by statistically analysing 'state fragility' and, therefore, reinforcing the view of 'fragile states' as a concept that reflects the real.

In always being relational, this approach distances itself from holistic theories, considering that the field, the space of social relations, is also constantly being changed by actors' struggles for position, which change the distribution of capitals, and therefore, modify the field itself. The habitus, in turn, although a form of embodied structural past experience that tends to reproduce this structure coherently, is also constantly leading to improvisation when it meets a changed field. Crucially, the habitus implies a critique to rationalisation as understood in rational choice theory:

> [Actors] can conduct themselves in a way that, in a rational evaluation of the probabilities of success, it seems they had reason to do what they did, without us having reason to say that the rational calculus of probabilities was the principle of the choice they made.[57]

Arguing for a 'primacy of relations' is to avoid the language and assumptions embedded in theories that imply ontological priorities. Avoiding rationalism (or intellectualist decision-making)[58] and holism, the key is, instead, in 'ontological complicity'.[59] This is the idea that actor and world possess one another, that actors' categories of perception and

[54] See also Bourdieu 1990a, p. 131.
[55] Ibid., p. 123; Hacking 2007, pp. 40, 41; Hacking 2012, p. 601.
[56] Bourdieu 2001b, p. 129. 'les produits d'un même habitus sont marqués par une unité de style'.
[57] Bourdieu 2008b, p. 138. 'Eles podem se conduzir de tal maneira que, em uma avaliação racional das probabilidades de sucesso, pareça que eles tinham razão em fazer o que fizeram, sem que tenhamos razão ao dizer que o cálculo racional das probabilidades tenha sido o princípio das escolhas que fizeram'.
[58] See Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 24, footnote 43.
[59] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 20. See also Bigo 2011.

appreciation and, therefore, their practices towards the world, are structured by this same world; just as the structure that provides possibilities and constraints are constantly shaped by the changing dynamics between actors' capitals, their distribution and structure.[60] This ontological complicity resonates Hacking's understanding of styles as self-authenticating by the very force of the mutual construction between style, methods and objects and the idea that what works is based on pragmatic standards.[61] The insight I borrow from both works is the possibility of approaching the classification of 'fragile states' as one that is as much reliant on its many methods and practices, as on actors, their trajectories and positions (including their experience in learning the very skills to apply such methods, the comfort in applying and the power to mobilise them) and, finally, on the urge to measure and classify itself. The complicity among these elements can dismiss intentions without dismissing power.

Understanding and truly applying this ontological complicity is a crucial proposition here, in that the idea is largely theoretically absorbed among approaches inspired by the 'practice turn' in social sciences, but often subtly pushed aside in favour of easier operationalisation. The greater contribution a relational approach focused on the 'logic of practice' can offer is precisely a take on power that is not anchored in intentions. I discuss power in the next section. First, the very idea of 'logic of practice' needs to be fully explored, as even analyses that have a Bourdieusian inspiration in common often slide towards an attempt to rescue rational decisioning by placing it at a post-practical moment of reasoning.

In a Bourdieu-inspired logic of practice, what guides agents is primarily a feel for the game; by becoming a player, actors are not indifferent to what is at stake, but are not primarily moved by strategic rationality either.[62] Actors become players by a form of subtle interest, what Bourdieu calls, *illusio* or *libido,* an acknowledgment of the importance of

[60] Ibid.

[61] Bourdieu also related his work to pragmatic theories and considered that 'affinities and convergences [were] quite striking.' See Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 122. I should repeat, neither him, nor Hacking identified themselves as *pragmatist*, but did recognise pragmatic ideas in their work. Indeed, Hacking once stated: 'One of the few domains in which I am consistently pragmatist, is pragmatism itself: use it when it is useful, but don't when it isn't.' Hacking 1998, p. 93. I believe the pragmatic elements in Bourdieu's and Hacking's approaches dealt with in this research can address the debate raised by Leander when commenting on pragmatic critiques to Bourdieu. See Leander 2011.

[62] On this point, see also Guzzini 2000, pp. 169-175.

being in the game, the feel for or inclination toward the game inculcated by habitus through a social existence where the game was seen as important and worth playing.[63] *Illusio* is, thus, the practical participation in a game to which one is not indifferent.[64]

> [The feel for the game] gives the game an objective sense, because the sense of the probable outcome that is given by practical mastery of the specific regularities that constitute the economy of a field is the basis of "sensible" practices, linked intelligibly to the conditions of their enactment, and also among themselves, and therefore immediately filled with sense and rationality for every individual who has the feel for the game (hence the effect of consensual validation which is the basis of collective belief in the game and its fetishes).[65]

Therefore, practice, in Bourdieu's theory, is not constituted by strategic interest *calculated* to achieve certain goals, but guided by *protension*, a form of acting that in foreseeing the results which are inscribed in the possibilities of the field is free, but free in the limits of possibilities offered by the field.[66] If we think of the classification of 'fragile states' as part of a combination of the styles of ordering and developing taxonomies and of statistically analysing and comparing – what I called style of thinking & doing political management of 'fragile states', we can easily conceive of this impetus to measure and classify 'fragile states' as something more profoundly historical and embedded. This style of thinking & doing heavily relies in quantification, technologies and in hugely complex bureaucratic machinery composed of actors in different places and levels. Moreover, being historical and embedded, this style of thinking & doing can be seen as based on educational and professional trajectories, modes of engaging with people and populations in distant countries and ways of formulating and providing information in times of so many technological possibilities. These should be seen among other many factors that help thinking the classification of 'fragile states', in its huge bureaucratic endeavour, as something much more complex than homogeneous blocs of intentions and utilitarian decision-making can possibly depict.

[63] See Bourdieu 1990b, p. 82.
[64] See Bourdieu 1990b, p. 104; 2008b, p. 140.
[65] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 66.
[66] Bourdieu 2008b, pp. 143-144.

The idea of *practices as imbued with practical sense*, which in turn is intrinsically connected to a broader, historical and mutable style of thinking & doing, is my second signpost in this research. My related *hypothesis* is, thus, that the successful (in that they hold) practices of classification of 'fragile states' are those which are able to mobilise all these elements and create the pragmatic standards that make thinking and doing 'fragility' *the* good reason among analysts. This view opens space for diverse practices, very importantly including indirect practices of categorisation, 'incidental' classification or failed attempts at changing methods and techniques; and I suggest all this helps to classify 'fragile states' in the sense that an ontological slippage takes place, making any different styles of thinking and doing powerfully impractical. I detail such practices ahead.

The vouched ontological complicity implies a careful policing against rationalist readings that insist in creeping in, even among approaches based on the same Bourdieusian ideas. Any concession made to a rationalised logic of practice tends to lose sight of the very subtleties the notion of practical sense should provide. There is no ontological priority to be attributed, not even to practices. At this point, however, and as Neumann points out, there is perhaps a need to clarify that this lack of ontological priority should not imply that practices are incorporated the same way in every account;[67] they should not be reified, as I do not believe they are in Bourdieu's approach. Also pointed out by Andersen and Neumann and perhaps the cause of such mistaken approaches to Bourdieu's theory of practice is the fact that it is a *theory*, and a complete methodological framework is not easily grasped from it.[68] As intrinsically connected to the habitus, practices are not to be dissociated from the history of the field, actors' trajectories and the discourses that compose actors' perception of the world. Thus, practices would always be approached according to the specificities of the object of research. Nevertheless, I approach the classification of 'fragile states' through an idea of style of thinking & doing precisely because I think this might depict in a clearer way the complexity of practices imbued with practical sense. For

[67] Neumann 2002, p. 635.
[68] See Andersen and Neumann 2012.

this thesis, it makes more analytically intuitive the crucial analysis of techniques, technologies, processes and tools, so central in the measuring and classification of 'fragile states'.[69] It is an analytical choice that does not alter the thesis' theoretical commitments, not least because, as seen, many of the key insights supporting this approach are shared by Bourdieu and Hacking.

I emphasise these points to avoid common pitfalls. Practice is not ontologically prior to the field or the habitus, as some approaches argue, looking forward to give prominence to practice as a new methodological tool in International Relations.[70] Practices are the product of ontological complicity and can only be understood in its rich subtleties if addressed as such. The result of doing differently is to give the logic of practice priority over 'other logics', an approach that often equals the logic of practice with instinct, while rationality is attached to a second moment of practice, after the instinct has been refined. When Pouliot, for instance, argues that the logic of practice is ontologically prior to the logics of consequences, appropriateness, and arguing, that can rightly mean that the very idea of what is rational, right or appropriate is constructed through practices, but it can also lead to an understanding that it is still quite an individual and rationalised decision that guides each practice.[71] This is an approach that looks at the practice not as the site where we can discuss the development and survival of a mode of thinking and doing, not as relational, but as simple raw data, which should be seen as complemented by other logics of action, developed by actors as a rational situated decision. This critique was also raised by Andersen and Neumann, who suggest Pouliot's approach uses practice as 'an epiphenomenal empirical manifestation of something else.'[72]

There are similar attempts to add 'emotion' to practice by investing practical moments with a background of feelings that would culminate in how actors choose to act.[73] Emotions, as schemes of appreciation, are also part of field' and habitus' complicity, crucially composed of past

[69] I agree with Hacking in that 'style of thinking & doing' is an explicit way of including theoretical and practical aspects of reasoning – as opposed, for instance, to 'style of reasoning', which he had used before. For his explanation, see Hacking 2012, p. 600.
[70] Pouliot 2008; Adler and Pouliot 2011a, 2011b.
[71] Pouliot 2008.
[72] Ibid., 479.
[73] Swidler 2001.

experiences and the knowledge about what they represent and what impacts they might cause.[74] However, although emotions are of course human and, therefore, part of practice, they should not be analysed as a separate element, distinct from the other background factors that together compose habitus. If emotions are an addition to practical logic, the latter is nothing but structural material determination, while emotion is the place of actors' decisioning. Being rationalisation or emotion, these approaches overall tend to give practice a different time, capable of being compartmented to the benefit of individual initiative. However, '[s]cience has a time which is not that of practice', the same way it has 'a logic which is not that of the logician'.[75] With such compartmentalisation between moments of different logics, or moments of emotion and logic, intentions creep back in and become the individual's mechanism of self-defence against instinct, merely individualising hyperbolic accounts: 'As long as practice is seen as regular and stable, it can hardly be viewed as a realistic adjustment to a resistant, changing and transformed world.'[76]

Indeed, if individuals or blocs of them can be distinctly charged, in one way or another, with the ultimate exclusive (that is, isolated) decisioning regarding their practices, the reasoning goes that they can also be distinctly pointed as the very independent producers of their practices' consequences. Thus, the embeddedness of practices is lost, and so are important exercises of diffuse power. Results without obvious producers are ignored, no matter their impact, or intentions are randomly assumed. Drawing the line between those who classify and those who are classified, those who 'oppress' and those who are 'oppressed' would be, thus, the logical consequent step. Practice would go from representing a way to discuss the complicity of structural constraints and actors' experiences to an understanding that practice, as raw data, can be grasped as primary inclination only, while rationalisation (or emotion rationalised) is charged with turning causes into consequences (as in 'stable deterrence' and 'arms

[74] Instincts would be a matter of psychological and biological analyses.
[75] Bourdieu 1990b, pp. 81, 86.
[76] Thévenot 2001, pp. 58-59.

control' turning into the idea of 'strategic interaction').[77] This is precisely what I want to avoid by invoking practices.

> This notion of 'practical sense' seeks to avoid the reproduction of oppositions between reason and emotion and strategy as consciousness and unconscious or spontaneous acts: oppositions that have become normalized in so much international relations theory. A more complex human anthropology is necessary. The reasons shaping human actions are relational, driven by a practical sense and by a degree of arbitrariness.[78]

The notion of practical sense allows an understanding of practices without rationalisation or consequentialism and away from privileged accounts of intentions. 'To say that a system benefit certain people does not mean that they caused that benefit or that they control it'. Guzzini identifies this as a kind of 'benefit-fallacy' based on 'power holder-centre and causal understanding':[79] The assumption of intentions leads the researcher to jump from the privileges or benefits to those who have them, connected by the programmatic intention to achieve these benefits.

Through the idea of practical sense, this research vehemently opposes this understanding, and it does so without losing sight of power and inequality. It does not look at *one* element of *one* power, much less an assumed one; rather it focuses on the way methods and objects combine in ontological complicity and pragmatic self-authentication, therefore, how power is made possible and sustained. This third signpost of the research is discussed below, along with my third hypothesis.

2.3. SYMBOLIC POWER: NUANCES, CAVEATS AND A BLUR

As emphasised, attention to quantification and comparison are central to this thesis' discussion on the classification of 'fragile states'. When databases collect, aggregate and rank statistics to measure human development through proxies such as 'under 5 mortality rate' and 'births attended by skilled health staff' in 'fragile states', one can hardly disagree

[77] Adler and Pouliot 2011a, p. 21.
[78] Bigo 2011, p. 228.
[79] Guzzini 2000, p. 171.

there is merit to that.[80] It can help governments, international organisations and NGOs to prioritise, allocate resources and develop new plans. Numbers, however, do not stay put. As sociologies of quantification have shown, numbers are ubiquitous to current policy-making because they are allegedly capable of capturing complex scenarios in parsimonious objective accounts. Moreover, these accounts are said to be objective because they are produced with supposed impartiality, based on Maths and technology; therefore, they can be 'safely' used by decision-makers, who will make decisions 'without seeming to decide'.[81] Hence, for being practical numbers travel, are refined, reworked and re-aggregated, the results of which are then, in general, hardly traceable back to any origins, much less in analyses of the macro type. Furthermore, even in the process of production, authorship is fuzzy, as statistics in policy-making are hardly the product of one mind.[82] Software, technologies, tools, and not least *teams*, compose, analyse and aggregate numbers, guided by a style of thinking and doing taxonomies and statistical analysis that has evolved from centuries of tests, studies and applied exercises. Ignoring this realm is to ignore important manifestations of power.

> [Indicators] reconstruct the places and people that they purport to measure, change how power and expertise are mobilized and often reproduce themselves as they prompt the creation of new layers or tiers of quantified evaluation.[83]

Numbers and quantified classifications that seem so practical are powerful exactly because they become the pragmatic and practical standard against which ideals are judged, in this case ideals of governance, statehood, legitimacy, capacity and so on.

> Our perception and our practice, especially our perception of the social world, are guided by *practical taxonomies* (…), and the classifications produced by these taxonomies owe their effectiveness to the fact that they are 'practical', that they allow one to introduce just enough logic for the needs of practical behavior, neither too much - since a certain vagueness is often indispensable, especially in negotiations – not too little, since life would then become impossible.[84]

[80] See, for example, World Bank Approved by the Executive Directors of IDA on February 15, 2011 (and modified on March 18, 2011)
[81] Porter 1995, p. 23.
[82] On both arguments, see Rocha de Siqueira 2014.
[83] Espeland and Sauder 2012, p. 86. Of course, indicators are not necessarily quantified, but in the case of 'fragile states' this is nearly always the case.
[84] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 73. My emphasis.

Facing such expansion and overwhelming force of standardisation, it seems actors who want to minimally engage in dialogue need to speak the same numerical language. Not because 'the West' *imposes* such practices, but because a deep-seated style of thinking & doing grounds practices in international politics and governance to a common routine of quantification and classification of which it is impractical to escape. Even though so many statistical analyses of 'fragile states' are constantly criticised by recipient governments, by critical scholars and practitioners in search of better methods and numbers, these numbers have become entrenched in everyday policy making – or rather has a style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' that is intrinsically linked to practices of measuring and ordering or ranking. Despite the high costs incurred by data acquisition and the necessary mastery of techniques, statistical and technical knowledge reinforce their importance by 'stripping away the contingencies of an object's creation and its situated nature', and producing the seemly objectivity of certain niches of policy-making.[85]

Following my first and second signposts, I suggest 'fragile states' are a pragmatic and practical reality of a style of thinking & doing of which they cannot be dissociated. Therefore, the price of disengagement is at the core of the third signpost. So much has been done with these schemes that any opposition has become impractical and too costly. It takes time for staff and equipment to assimilate new software and for knowledge to be acquired, and investments have to offer a return. Moreover, when a system has finally become practically usable, comfort and predictability dictate the options. Indicators can become powerful by the subtle imposition inherent in this cost: At the end of the day a 'material culture of [numerical] bureaucracy'[86] is so ingrained in our understanding of the world that writing down numbers and making them official is but a secondary step in a deeply seated style of thinking & doing.

I suggest understanding this practicality is crucial to look at the recent dynamics in international politics after the foundation of the g7+ group of self-labelled fragile states. I am not aware of any studies so far that have focused on analysing the group's initiative to produce their own

[85] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 299.
[86] Ibid., p. 137.

Fragility Spectrum and *Fragility Assessment*, but one can confidently assume critics who protest against the measuring of postcolonial states based on Western standards would at least be uneasy about the projects.[87] The Fragility Assessments proposed, as will be discussed, are deeply quantified; they also simplify analyses of complex issues to produce proxies; and, crucially, they count on logistical assistance and advice from donor representatives who sit in the committees for the development of common and individual indicators for each country. There is, however, a stated aim not to rank the g7+'s member states based on these assessments, but merely to use the final scores to measure each country's particular needs and performance.[88] Nonetheless, not only did the g7+ countries embraced the fragile state label (at least internationally, as will be discussed), but the group has also incorporated the quantifying practices of donors, producing the numbers that might corroborate their classification. I come back to this central debate in chapter six.

SYMBOLIC POWER

My *hypothesis* is that rather than the classification of 'fragile states' being founded on a clear-cut relation of 'oppressor' vs 'oppressed', the recent events indicate it might be more of a rich picture to talk about *symbolic power*, a Bourdieusian notion that is strongly attached both to the idea of 'practical sense' and to the dynamics of self-authentication of a style of thinking & doing. The hypothesis suggests the symbolic power might be the crucial impact of the quantified practices that classify 'state fragility'. If techniques, tools, processes, discourses and practices change, it is conceivable that the relations of power are also transformed, adapted and differently expressed. That is strongly supported by the immensely practical power of statistics in the international political management of 'fragile states', very peculiar in its production and use and much less straight-forward, but none less powerful.

The idea of symbolic power is centred in the practical sense in that the self-evident aspect of reality becomes so strong it is capable of drawing

[87] See International Dialogue Secretariat 4 December 2012; International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Working Group on Indicators 2012.
[88] Ibid.

the complicity of those in principle seen as least favoured by it. The dialogue outside of the principles of vision and di-vision of the world, of the style of thinking & doing at place, becomes impossible, as 'a different way of thinking would prohibit any form of action on the world.'[89] The power of the style and its self-authenticating character comes from the practical sense and the 'naturalness' it puts in place: 'The most efficacious strategies of distinction are those which find their principle in the practical, pre-reflexive, quasi-instinctual choices of habitus.'[90] Hence, I suggest that a strongly established style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' based on statistical analysis and the development of taxonomies helped turning quantification and classification into practical necessities, the reflection of a view of the world that categorises statehood according to specific standards.

As my hypothesis goes, this implies that the foundation of the g7+ and the group's development of a Fragility Spectrum and Assessment also respond to the widespread thinking & doing that became entrenched in the management of 'fragile states'. The practical urge to dialogue and participate is strongly connected to the practical need to use the same 'language'. In the case of 'fragile states', it seems the measuring and classification became seen as of great need to ground requests for dialogue, different forms of interventions and resource allocation.

Therefore, the notion of symbolic power helps to address the seemly complicity of those classified, a key feature of the current scenario that has so far been ignored by most scholars. I would guess (it is all I can do with non-existent approaches) the general assumption is that either the movement will wither and, thus, deserves no proper research; that it is not legitimate and perhaps reflects the view of only a few Western-educated members of the elite in the member states; or that the group is programmatically and systematically applying the same style of thinking & doing with the strategic aim of getting hold of more resources. I suggest that, with the exception of the first possible assumption, which cannot be currently judged and in any case would not make an analysis less needed, these assumptions should not be seen in terms of either/or. More

[89] Desrosières 1998, p. 11
[90] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 115.

importantly, they can easily lead to the dismissal of the very agency[91] some of them may advocate. If the classified are engaging in self-classification, ignoring transformations and change undermines the very possibility of such events.

The idea of symbolic power is also relevant to approach the many nuances I see in the debate since the rankings became more widespread and, mainly, since the foundation of the g7+. In his work, Bourdieu presents strong critiques towards 'pure linguistics', suggesting their approach does not reflect the social conditions, social usages and relations of power involved in discourse and 'proceed as if the theoretical mastery of the code sufficed to confer practical mastery of socially appropriate usages'.[92] The symbolic power is, therefore, related to actors' ability to make their authority known by making socially adequate use of the methods available, language or numbers – 'the power to secure recognition of power'.[93] In a world where state capacity and legitimacy is measured by numbers, statistics do not describe only the measured, but are also a reflection of the authority of those who do the measuring. Numbers 'minimise the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust', therefore de-humanising certain processes that become seen as technical and straight-forward.[94] Hence, the many critiques towards the quantification of approaches to 'fragile states'.

However, through an idea of symbolic power, numbers also bring important nuances to the politics of 'classifiers': The level of expertise made necessary by this increasingly technical and technological dynamic of management does not only make it impractical not to use the same language, but also puts a burden over those who classify. Bourdieu suggests the gentle violence of symbolic power is peculiar in that sense, as '[t]he great can least afford to take liberties with the official norms and they have to pay for their outstanding value with exemplary conformity to the values of the group'.[95] Skills and expertise, just as numbers, are never complete. Ignoring these 'weakening' elements hanging upon 'classifiers'

[91] In the sense of autonomy to decide and act. See Bigo 2011, footnote 19.
[92] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, pp. 141-2. See also Bourdieu 1990b, pp. 30-41.
[93] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 131.
[94] Porter 1995, p. 10.
[95] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 129.

also seems a strange approach to relations of power one aims to evaluate and criticise.[96]

Thinking of the relations between 'classifiers' and 'classified' in the classification of 'fragile states' in terms of symbolic power contributes with yet other important nuances. It does seem the case that numbers that classify 'state fragility' respond to a broader, hugely powerful history of increasingly technical management and government, which makes them of perhaps unusually highly practical character.[97] As sociologists of quantification have long suggested, numbers derive authority, legitimacy and fluidity from their technical image of objectivity and neutrality. It is important to emphasise that all countries, without exception, are currently measured in their many government's capacities by all kinds of actors, from government, international institutions, think tanks, scholars to NGOs. The peculiarity in the use of quantification in approaches towards 'fragile states' is two-fold. First, numbers tend to have more direct and powerful impacts on international profile, hence, on resource allocation and leverage for negotiation in contracts, projects and priorities. Second, numbers also tend to be less endogenous in the case of 'state fragility', because frequent crises in so-called fragile states tend to eliminate the possibility of having stable, skilled and up-to-date staff and resources able to produce the same kind of statistics as development banks and other international organisations do, and at the same pace and volume.

Impacts on categorisation are well known and largely criticised. The unbalance in skills, however, can be richly analysed through the notion of symbolic power as part of the self-authenticating aspect of the style. The unbalance in skills make it necessary that certain numbers be produced elsewhere, which makes the bias of numbers an issue that can contribute to more fragilisation, and these impacts are seen as factors to encourage the development of local capacity, which reinforces the view that such capacities and their products are needed in the first place. Indeed, speaking of symbolic power means to consider how prescription and description can become one and the same among the practical pressures

[96] Ibid., p. 131.
[97] Hacking also acknowledged that the case of statistical language might be unique in its capacity for self-authentication through 'unusual transparency'. See Hacking 1992, p. 144.

in the game.[98] All that packed in the never-ending cycle of refinement and re-aggregation, since by their very peculiar nature, and not least for the constant technological advances, statistics are always amenable to improvement.

THE THIRD SIGNPOST

Therefore, my hypothesis on symbolic power works with the self-authenticating character of the style and the self-evident world generated by the practical sense to think of the nuanced possibilities of exercising power in the classification of 'fragile states'. These nuances have the positive aspect of opening space to the possibility of change and transformation, by focusing on the initiatives of the g7+, without assuming irrelevance or purely strategic and utilitarian aims. Instead, I focus on what led to these initiatives and on the changes donors agencies also had to endure in order to cope with the challenges created by the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. The notion of symbolic power also crucially draws attention to the important role of 'practicality' or 'social comfort' to which methods have to attend and outside of which dialogue is impractical. Thus, the notion sheds light on how description and prescription become one and the same, that is, on how symbolic power can be power, even if subtle. Very importantly, it also emphasises the role of skills and expertise in the acknowledgment of authority and, thus, in the practices that authenticate this style of thinking & doing. Finally, through my hypothesis, I suggest these issues of practicality and skilled authority cannot be ignored in any consideration of change and transformation.

3. COMBINED HYPOTHESES

In seeking to answer '*what practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?*', this thesis raises three main hypotheses, discussed in turn in the previous three sections:

a) The practices that classify 'state fragility' are part of a broad *style of thinking & doing* historically embedded in the objective role of statistical analysis and in the importance attributed to order and taxonomy –

[98] Bourdieu 2001a, part 2, ch. 3.

quantification and classification, therefore, are not mere technical tools, but the practices that lead to a widespread view of the world as divided, measurable and manageable;

b) These *practices* are not the operationalisation of a Western homogeneous intention to control and dominate, but in their bureaucratic mobilisation reflect a *practical sense* that answers to the style's historical embeddedness, individuals' trajectories and positions, hence, dispensing with utilitarian and intellectualist approaches to decision-making of both globally structural and strictly individualist kinds;

c) The self-authenticating force of this style, based on the ubiquity of numbers in management and policy and the practical sense that leads these quantified analyses to perpetuate one vision of the world effect a *symbolic power* in the 'fragile states' agenda, a power grounded on the complicity of 'the labelled', the costs imposed to the 'labellers', the central role of authority and expertise.

To these three main hypotheses, I add one that comes precisely from the combination of these ideas: I suggest the practicality in this style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' through quantification and classification and the symbolic power in these practices contribute to creating and reinforcing a realm that, in its technicality, becomes comfortably distanced from politicians. This does not mean that these practices evade politics, and this thesis is based on this understanding. However, it means that, as the authentication of the style is made possible mainly by the engagement of quantifying experts, this authentication also tends to allow the disengagement of rather 'non-quantifying' actors, such as Ministries beyond Finance and Development Cooperation. Moreover, as these developments unfold, I also suggest the g7+s risks losing the local stories its representatives have publicly cherished so far, that is, things that cannot be or are seen as better articulated if not quantified. As issues that are yet in development, I leave these debates open but importantly signalled in the last chapter.

One can raise the argument that these are not substantial hypotheses to the question proposed. I would answer they are, to the extent that they define the limits and possibilities of the specific answers I propose. They involve a) describing the entrenchment of statistics in the

political management of 'fragile states; b) showing the direct and indirect practices that help to strengthen this style of thinking & doing in terms of classification and quantification; and c) analysing the case of the g7+ with the many nuances just proposed, in terms of the politics of 'classifiers', the authority of skills, the moment of the foundation of the group in relation to the moment of entrenched quantification in policy and the struggles over a still 'uncomfortable' commonality.

The three signposts or hypotheses above delineate my own way of enquiring the debate; they reflect, for example, the understanding that practices which cannot be attributed to specific authors should also be considered, that unintended categorisation as much as planned ranking is equally powerful in reproducing the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states, and that the power of practicality should not be undermined, thus, that things able to become ubiquitously comfortable should be seen as extremely powerful. The thesis builds upon these ideas block by block along the next chapters.

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

In attempting to answer my question '*what practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?*', and following the signposts above discussed, I look at practices that fit the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' through statistical analysis and taxonomies. However, in the spirit of the discussions in the previous section, it is important to emphasise that the practices related to the style are not restricted to practices of quantification *stricto sensu*, but involve any practices that contribute to the thinking and doing of managing 'fragile states' in terms of measurable categories. Hence, one of the key contributions of this approach is the possibility of opening space to indirect but powerful practices of classification, and with that, as discussed, bringing nuances to an analysis of power in the topic.

Crucially and implicit in this style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' is an understanding of measures and names '*as practice*'. As Andersen and Neumann suggest, this does not involve transforming all nouns into verbs - not simply 'X-ing', but the specific insight that X as practice involves thinking and discourse, anything that contributes

to the embeddedness of the style through practical sense.[99] Thus, *practices* are not the verbalisation of nouns, not merely the raw 'observable' action or the actors' description of what they do as practices, but the thinking and doing of a reality that becomes self-evident. Factors contributing to such a construction can be analysed *as practices*. The underlining point of departure, thus, is that 'social meaning is defined as use',[100] not as inherent identities or assumed programmatic intentions. Therefore, a methodology towards practices and practical sense as imbued in a style of thinking & doing involves looking at practices as methods in the analysis of the objects the style helps to construct. 'Methods' here need to be understood in the context of my approach to style as the means to enquire the world or as ways to finding out.[101] The reasoning is, thus, that it is essential to focus on practices that help to construct the reality of 'state fragility' as something measurable and manageable.

In addition, it is important to find among these practices those that contribute to a cycle of self-authentication, that is, those practices that, in creating and analysing this 'lack of legitimacy and capacity' by acting on it, reinforce the practicality of the measuring and classification, strengthening the practical sense that leads to see these quantified taxonomies as of practical use, as something that 'works'. Methods/practices and objects cannot be dissociated.

Following these insights, this research focuses on the practice of aid allocation as an umbrella practice crucial in understanding how 'fragile states' are classified; after all, to paraphrase Desrosières, it is precisely because there is a will to act on things that it is necessary to name and describe them – including numerically.[102] This, however, will be only in the background discussion of all practices analysed, since this is where they tend to convert in an analysis of priorities in decision-making. In seeking the practices that support the style of thinking & doing this political management, I break down aid allocation into the practices that are used to calculate aid and to decide on how to execute it, by directly or indirectly naming and describing 'state fragility': *practices of ranking, advising,*

[99] Andersen and Neumann 2012, p. 468.
[100] Ibid., p. 470.
[101] Hacking 2012.
[102] Desrosières 1998, p. 41.

*monitoring and evaluation (*generally called M&E, as parts of one same practice), all of which include the basic practice of *data collection*. I address them diffusely throughout the next chapters.

As discussed, these practices are understood as part of a broad context where objects and methods cannot be dissociated; they are intrinsically connected in a style of thinking & doing that authenticates itself by attending to pragmatic standards. It follows from this that practices and discourse cannot be separated, as the construction of meaning depends on both thinking and doing. In a first instance and very straight-forwardly, each of the many debates that are part of the approach to 'fragile states' rely on specific phrasings of the issues at hand: 'service delivery', 'whole of government approaches', 'managing for results', among so many others. As Neumann formulates, '[p]ractices are discursive, both in the sense that some practices involve speech acts (acts which in themselves gesture outside of narrative), and in the sense that practice cannot be thought "outside of" discourse.'[103] Furthermore, as Leander suggests, taking practices into account in the Bourdieusian way means to consider that the discourse by itself does not account for the social position of actors, hence, for their authority to produce effective discourse, and that a focus on discourse alone might leave aside important unarticulated practices.[104] Indeed, Bourdieu sought to combine the analysis of discourse with the important power relations in which it is inserted, thus, to combine it with the practices that made possible for these relations to be sustained, for certain authority to be attributed to specific speakers and specific discourses, and for this authority to be acknowledged by a certain audience: '[B]y searching for them in discourse alone, "discourse analysis" prevents itself from finding the laws of construction of discourse which lie in the laws of construction of the social space of production of discourse.'[105] In line with the idea of a style of thinking & doing, discourse, practices and power walk side by side.

In the following, I discuss what cuts I apply to the research and why, and what methods I use to operationalise my approach in a way as to consider the discussed insights on style, practical sense and symbolic violence.

[103] Neumann 2002, p. 628.
[104] Leander 2006, p. 2.
[105] Bourdieu and Christin 1990c, p. 79 *apud* Bourdieu 1990a, p. 144, footnote 96.

4.1. RESEARCH CUTS

First and crucially, as briefly mentioned in the Introduction, I choose to focus on the development sector of the 'fragile states' agenda. The historical overview offered in chapter one sought to show the main movements in the agenda because some of the points raised are important for the discussions to come, but the research focuses solely on the development industry. Precisely because the notion of power is perhaps less obviously represented in the development sector, it is also there where powerful practices seem to need deeper scrutiny. The sector is also of crucial importance because it combines what have been pointed at by 'fragile states'' representatives themselves as the key issues of interest for these governments: It involves concerns over 'physical' interventions as much as poverty reduction, markets, financial assistance, jobs and capacity building.[106]

As such, I choose yet to limit my research to the relations between OECD, the World Bank and the g7+, as I think these are key agencies to understand the current politics of classifying 'fragile states'. As seen, the g7+ is a unique and recent platform of self-labelled fragile states and, as such, it provides an extremely rich object of research, one also crucial to explore the hypothesised symbolic power previously discussed. Moreover, as shown, the g7+ has developed its own Fragility Spectrum and Assessment, which provide a promising source of data on the practices of classifying 'fragile states'.

The World Bank and the OECD, in turn, are key donor agencies in the volume of resources flown to so-called fragile states and in terms of the production of reports that reflect the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. These documents quantify 'state fragility', proposing correspondent targets and tools for measuring results, and link these elements with proposed forms of intervention and assistance. Furthermore, these documents tend to serve as the basis for many other agencies' and government's initiatives towards 'fragile states'. A key example is OECD's *Principles for Good International Engagement in*

[106] Indeed, the war on terror and critiques to the US national security policies are nowhere mentioned in the g7+'s documents.

Fragile States, now adopted by all major donors.[107] Another example, briefly discussed in the previous chapter, is the World Bank's CPIA, perhaps one of the most used and debated (indirect) rankings of 'fragile states', one which is employed by many other agencies.[108]

Furthermore, in terms of aid flows, the last Independent Evaluation Group (IEG)'s analysis of the World Bank's performance in 'fragile and conflict-affected states' from 2000 to 2011 identified an increase in aid to 'fragile states' of 250 percent, compared to 40 percent to 'non-fragile states'. The report states that 'DAC assistance has in effect reversed the trend of performance-based allocation of aid to low-income countries.'[109] It is important to highlight that the DAC is one of the main bodies that constitute OECD; it is composed of 29 members, including the European Union, and others among the 'most developed countries' in the world.[110]

The World Bank's assistance itself did not present such increase, although the volume of assistance is hugely significative compared to the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 'fragile states'.[111] Nonetheless, the organisation has undergone what are perhaps the most radical structural changes among development agencies. It has adapted operational policies to deal with situations of conflict, and promoted changes in the usual performance-based allocation framework to increase financial flows to 'fragile states'. It also created new departments, started offering increasing incentives and a special career plan for staff to work in 'fragile states', besides investing in new expertise on conflict and security.[112] Together, therefore, the OECD, the World Bank and the g7+ offer a unique depiction of current debates on 'fragile states'.

Narrowing down this research cut, in the case of the g7+ I focus specifically on Timor-Leste, as the country that led the foundation of the group, together with DRC and Liberia, and chaired the initiative from 2010 to 2013, in its crucial beginning and quick expansion.[113] In addition, the Timorese Minister of Finance, Emília Pires, has been a highly active

[107] See ODI 17 Dec 2004; OECD 2007b; ODI 17 Dec 2004; The LICUS Initiative 2005.
[108] See Fabra Mata and Ziaja 2009.
[109] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013, p. 167.
[110] See OECD, 'DAC Members'.
[111] See Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013, chapter 9.
[112] Ibid. See also World Bank 4 April 2011.
[113] g7+, 'About'. From seven initial members in 2010, the group counted 19 in 2014.

spokesperson for the group, participating in various committees, including the High Level Panel for the post-2015 Development Agenda.[114]

4.2. METHODS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In a Bourdieusian understanding of practice as fundamentally embedded in history, individual objective positions and trajectories, and with the insight on the self-authentication of styles, I apply a *cross-referencing of documents and interviews*, which allows me to a) trace the power of discourses whose authorship *can* be traced; b) identify, in that case, which actors were crucial for the advance of such discourse and what kind of authority gave them this power; c) understand how this discourse comes to be, sustains itself and is practiced, that is, what mechanisms serve as basis for it to be said to 'work'; d) approach, in that case, the struggles that take place between different 'views of the world'; e) look at practices that cannot be traced back to specific origins – such as the case of many statistical exercises, therefore, taking into account the power of non-intended results; f) consider the power of practical imposition (practicality) and the impact it might generate in terms of symbolic power, by looking at the conditions in which such practices took place.

These contributions reflect the key understanding that practices are not raw data, hence, not restricted to what I, as analyst, can see. In this, I assume an different stance from Andersen and Neumann, one that is congruent with the objects of the research. In fact, several of the practices studied cannot be observed; this impossibility, however, is not an ontological one, but related to a crucial issue of access in the very specific case of quantifying practices. Many of these practices are imbricated in technologies, softwares and open databases that allow for an enormous numbers of inputs from different actors, and many uses made of certain numbers cannot be attributed to or matched with original designs.[115] That means that some practices that are more deeply imbricated, such as basic data collection and analysis, long lost and covered by layers of re-work, can

[114] See The Post-2015 Development Agenda, 'High Level Panel'.
[115] See Lampland and Star 2009, chapter 1. Essentially, 'imbrication' indicates overlapping layers, like in ancient stone walls, and 'infra-structure' is a fundamentally relational property, something that 'other things run on'. See also Rocha de Siqueira 2014, for a discussion on traceability.

only be studied through the mechanisms set in motion *with* them (it is impossible or nearly so to say '*by* them'), like technologies and software, and by the political implications that accompany them, developed in the context of development assistance. Nevertheless, I take on Andersen's and Neumann's suggestion to also approach practices through accounts of actors themselves, and here, to cross-reference them with documents.[116]

Indeed, the research cross-references official documents, reports, drafts and databases produced by the actors selected on the topic of 'fragile states' and interviews with some of the professionals who work in the production of this data. The framework for selection of documents and interviewees is set by the specific practices I proposed to analyse: selection for aid, ranking, monitoring, evaluation, advising and data collection. The interviews were conducted with as varied a range of professionals as possible, to understand the many sources and inspirations of quantification and classification, and thus, how the style becomes entrenched. I conducted 30 interviews with professionals from OECD, the World Bank, the g7+ and the government of Timor-Leste, and attended two core high-level meetings, one during the 2013 UN General Assembly, and the other during a ministerial event in OECD-INCAF, also in 2013. In the meetings, my aim was to observe the attendance, the relations among actors, how a dialogue took place, and what sort of 'rituals' they went through in asserting authority. Both events were held under Chatham House Rules, so names or nationalities cannot be attributed. Most of the individual interviewees, however, authorised identification.

The interviews were semi-structured and heavily based on specific documents or procedures to which the actors were particularly related. I strived to bring experts from different backgrounds. In the case of the complex bureaucracy and huge infra-structure of the World Bank, for instance, I interviewed experts in data and statistics, CPIA, education, gender, environment, Timor-Leste, Asia and Pacific, and crucially, professionals from the Global Center on Conflict, Security and Development, whose work focuses on 'fragile states'. From OECD, I interviewed members of the INCAF and the IDPS, and from the g7+ and Timor-Leste, I interviewed the Finance Minister, Emília Pires, a member of

[116] Andersen and Neumann 2012, p. 470.

the staff in the same ministry, one government official from another g7+ country, and two staff members of the g7's secretariat.

Borrowing Bourdieu's insights means, as Bigo emphasises, that analysts should be reflexive as to their own positions and *habitus*; however, they will never be neutral and should never aim to 'emancipate' actors by placing themselves in a privileged position of those who speak the truth, which would only create another form of domination.[117] I aim the research to be political, in the sense that it looks at struggles to determine a view of the world where 'fragile states' suffer important impacts of a specific style of thinking & doing. It is also political in its attempt precisely not to silence neither the weakening factors in the politics of 'classifiers', nor (and crucially) the self-labelling initiatives, therefore, avoiding to paradoxically side-line the counter-move critics are supposed to encourage.

As far as political and critical engagement go, my contribution is to open space for the subtleties of power exerted in indirect ways, the importance of practicality and the possibilities of change that the notion of symbolic power helps to problematise in this specific debate. The result is not a static theory of what the classification of 'fragile states' is or what it represents, but what debates, powerful implications and possibilities it currently generates within the limits proposed by this research.

[117] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

DIFFERENCE AS MAGNITUDE:

THE QUANTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF 'FRAGILE STATES'

'Statistics is history without motion; history is statistics in motion.'[1]

The curious point about the above maxim is how true it was when statistics were an infant practice and how false it would be considered now by those who affirm we are about to witness a data revolution.[2] In his book on the history of statistical reasoning, Desrosières describes how Germany, one of the first countries to develop such tradition, quickly moved in the nineteenth century from general Aristotelian taxonomies of its tiny states, which had no special use other than for organisation, to an 'equivalence space that led to quantitative statistics', with cross tables being split into rows and columns that allowed comparison between states. Desrosières suggests this was the beginning of a clear differentiation 'between graphic and spoken reasoning', intensified by the requests to put numbers in the rows so as to further facilitate comparison. Already then, these infant quantitative statistics were criticised for erasing singularity and generating oversimplification.[3] Meanwhile, in England, it became common practice for professionals from different areas to collect statistics on several aspects of

[1] Schlozer' s maxim. See Desrosières 1998, p. 19.
[2] See, for example, Lal Das 13 March 2014.
[3] Desrosières 1998, pp. 20-21.

the population for the use of the Crown, a method that was then eloquently known as 'political arithmetic'.[4]

Ideas of inference and probability could be found as far back as in the sixteenth century, but modern statistical analyses only began permeating science- and policy-making in the nineteenth century, when nation states became 'essentially characterized by its statistics' and, thus, in Hacking's poetic words, the 'world became numerical'.[5] Desrosières, as others, suggests that it was 'the need to know a nation in order to govern it [that] led to the organization of official bureaus of statistics'.[6]

Looking at statistical analyses today, we can say analysts still measure the same kind of social features of different populations and many of the core statistical techniques are in fact quite the same – regression, correlation, standard deviation and so on, so what has changed, if anything?[7] And how is that relevant to the question of what practices classify 'fragile states' and what their impacts are? The answer is related to why the maxim previously mentioned would hardly be held true by current statisticians: The scope, volume, mobility, visualisation and speed of production of statistical analyses have turned the elaboration of statistical taxonomies into a perceived effective form of historical (and political) account. Because the numbers can change quickly, be re-aggregated and re-designed, that is, because there are skills, technology and reasoning for this work, statistics are seen as very much capable of depicting history in motion; it is as if numbers can move as fast as facts. The two important factors to consider in this chapter is how powerful these quantifying practices came to be in the classification of 'fragile states' and, crucially, how deeply entrenched this style of thinking & doing is in this politics of classification.

In the comparisons invited by analysis of 'state fragility', just as happened in Germany in the nineteenth century, quantification is essential to make difference become magnitude.[8] In the intensity (that is, volume, speed, access and so on) with which statistical analyses of 'fragile states'

[4] Ibid., 17.
[5] See Hacking 1990, pp. 5, 18.
[6] Desrosières 1998, p. 16.
[7] Many of which were actually developed throughout the centuries, beginning in the sixteenth century and slowly merging with statistical reasoning as we know it now. See Hacking 1990.
[8] Espeland and Stevens 1998, p. 316.

are currently practiced, numbers tell stories and stories can change because difference can be *measured and managed* so often and so quickly that measurement and management seem to work together also in real time. Being at the bottom of a taxonomy is presented as a rather mutable condition, as long as the numbers are known and tamed.

This chapter does not argue there is novelty in this use of statistics *per se*; on the contrary, the next chapter will work from the analysis discussed here to trace parallels with the statistical reasoning born in the nineteenth century. The points to be debated in this chapter are rather the unprecedented level in which this is put to practice now and the related perceived increase in the authority and necessity of these methods, to the point where being able to measure and classify is in itself a measurable, manageable and much sought capacity, as discussed along the thesis. In this sense, the statistical reasoning depicted here is one feature of the current development industry, in which context the composition of 'state fragility' is one of many numerical compositions, but an especially impactful one.

This chapter provides a brief 'historical sociology', or rather, a historical sociological argument. Indeed, Tilly points precisely at how historical sociology evolved from a deep dissatisfaction with development models. According to him, these models did not account for how 'underdevelopment' was formed and for how 'development' had not worked quite that perfectly in Western countries either – such models were 'strangely timeless', he says. In general, a historical sociological argument takes into account time and space; 'take[s] temporal sequences seriously'; studies unintended as well as intended outcomes; highlights 'the particular and varying' specific kinds of social structures and patterns of change.[9] Therefore, it serves as an especially fitting kind of introduction to a research that aims to start by understanding the context in which the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' became 'socially comfortable'. I look here at the historical sociology of the entrenchment of quantification in the development assistance towards 'fragile states'.

Accordingly, the discussion in this chapter touches upon many aspects of the signposts previously discussed, but it focuses more

[9] Skocpol 1984, p. 1. See also Tilly 1980, 1996,2001.

specifically on the first signpost, exploring the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' through quantification and classification. I discuss how the World Bank and OECD adapted to the topic of 'state fragility' while measuring and ordering it, and how these practices of quantification became increasingly associated with the very definition and management of 'fragile states'. As the reasoning goes, the fact that numbers on 'state fragility' are produced means 'fragile states' can and should be measured, and if they can be measured, this 'fragility' is therefore a social reality to which methods need to constantly adapt in order to understand and manage. Accordingly, the argument goes, '[w]hen you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind.'[10]

In this chapter, I look at the events that led to the merge of this quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda,[11] discussing organisational, structural, operational and substantial changes in the World Bank and OECD and the foundation of the g7+. These elements are distributed in three sections. The first focuses mainly on the transformations regarding the OECD and the World Bank both in terms of quantifying practices and in the forms of understanding and defining 'state fragility', which involve an increasing connection, at least on paper, of security[12] and development. The second section uses the World Bank's CPIA to exemplify both these changes and the increasing critique to donors' measurements and their impacts. The third section places the foundation of the g7+ in the very culmination of the merge of a quantifying

[10] Kelvin Dictum, quoted in Merton, Sills et al. 1984, p. 320.

[11] It is important to notice: I use 'agenda' as an analytical choice, the composition of which is investigated throughout the thesis. 'Field' would be perhaps expected in a research inspired by Bourdieu's work, but it became analytically confusing; it would go more or less like this: 'a field of development professionals who work on "state fragility"' or 'a field of "state fragility" management professionals', which would be too convoluted. 'Agenda' denotes the urge to 'act upon' of these professionals, *and* most importantly, considering the detailed discussion on style, practices and symbolic power, I believe a basis is provided for this terminology not to be mistaken by a policy-oriented approach. In fact, the sequence of chapters is intended to make it clear the tone with which the terminology is used.

[12] The g7+ mostly refers to 'security'. Donors often use 'security' in the body of reports, but titles and extended versions of the 'fragile states' label usually use 'conflict' or 'conflict-affected' (with few exceptions when both 'conflict' and 'security' are used in titles). A discussion on these uses is beyond the scope of this research, but I would venture to say that 'conflict' is rather referred to as the obvious symptom of the disease 'insecurity' or 'lack of security'. See INCAF [2009]; World Bank 2011b; World Bank, 'Working Differently in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations'; International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) 6-7 June 2011.

and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda, reflecting many accumulated critiques to the results of this merge.

1. A RACE FOR INDICATORS AND THE 'FRAGILE STATES' AGENDA: AID EFFECTIVENESS, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY

In 1997, the first edition of the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* (*WDI)* forecasted: 'The global economy is undergoing an information revolution that will be as significant in effect as the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.'[13] Notwithstanding the merit of this comparison, this section focuses on this information revolution in the specific case of the definition and political management of 'fragile states', by illustrating some of the key changes in the World Bank and OECD in their approach to the topic since the early 1990s.

1.1. THE MERGE OF A QUANTIFYING AND CLASSIFYING REASONING WITH THE 'FRAGILE STATES' AGENDA

When in 1991, the OECD published a guide with principles for evaluating development assistance, it suggested: 'Aid agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods'; '[t]he evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making, and the delivery and management of development assistance'; and '[t]he evaluation process must be as open as possible with the results made widely available.'[14] This reflected an early concern among donors with keeping track of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the results obtained. It was an effort to justify to these countries' citizens the flow of donations and investments, and later to coordinate efforts and avoid overlaps. It was also part of a data collection rationale that had deep roots in the original mandate of the organisation, leading to its reputation as one of the most reliable producers of data in several aspects of politics, economics and social matters.[15] However, for many years, until the mid-2000s, the organisation did not dedicate any

[13] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2013, p. iii.
[14] OECD 1991, p. 4.
[15] OECD, 'Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development', article 3; Coicaud and Zhang 2011; Nay 2014.

special attention to post-conflict countries or 'fragile states'. It restricted itself to produce, analyse and circulate data that was seen as useful by its member states, with no particular programme towards non-OECD countries. This thinking substantially changed from the mid-2000s onwards.

In 1992, the *DAC Principles for Effective Aid* compelled members of the OECD-DAC to create the 'fundamental conditions' for aid effectiveness where recipient countries did not provide effective institutions and policies, hence, moving to considerations about the challenges of 'underdevelopment' for the donors' projects taking place: '[A]id can only be as effective as the policy, economic, and administrative environment in which it operates'.[16] In the 1990s, the focus was on improving aid effectiveness as provided by donors, with no specific agenda about how it should work for recipient countries. In those terms, data was also produced as demanded by member states, and a quick search in OECD iLibrary shows that books and papers in the 1990s tended to concentrate on macroeconomic, financial and industrial issues.[17] One key exception, however, was produced as the result of a partnership with the UN and in the context of the many meetings and conferences that would lead to the Millennium Declaration in 2000: In 1996, the OECD-DAC published the *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, which provided reasons for development agencies to consider the role and importance of peace and conflict in development. As an often forgotten early document, the message was almost premonitory of what was to become widespread after 2001. In justifying DAC's $60 billion-a-year contribution to ODA, it states:

> The first motive is fundamentally humanitarian. Support for development is a compassionate response to the extreme poverty and human suffering that still afflict one-fifth of the world's population…The moral imperative of support for development is self-evident. The second reason for supporting development is enlightened self-interest. Development benefits people not only in poor countries, but also in the industrialised donor countries. Increased prosperity in the developing countries demonstrably expands markets for the goods and services of the industrialised countries. Increased human security reduces pressures for migration and accompanying social and environmental stresses. Political stability and social cohesion diminish the risks of war, terrorism and crime that inevitably spill over into other countries.[18]

[16] OECD 1992, p. 5.
[17] OECD, 'iLibrary': searching 'non-OECD'.
[18] OECD 1996, p. 6.

An unsuspecting researcher might think the quote was taken from a post-9/11 document. Nonetheless, the rationale was beginning to be delineated much earlier than 2001. The fact that the link between development and security was not incorporated later in the MDGs should be noted and highlighted. I will come back to this point later in this chapter.

The *Shaping the 21st Century* also argues for the need to improve *monitoring* mechanisms to check that the goals established for aid coordination would truly improve aid effectiveness. It suggested OECD members made use of the 'growing body of work on results-oriented programming, evaluations and follow-up', while also suggesting that members were continuously monitored themselves in the application of the document's lessons.[19]

Following this drive to verify effectiveness, up until the 2000s OECD's work led to efforts to both improve *evaluation* of aid programmes and to understand how development results could hinder peace and be hindered by conflict. In 1997, the OECD published a crucial document indicating the firm beginning of a discussion about how development, humanitarian assistance and conflict could be analysed together. The *Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the Threshold of the 21st Century* stated:

> Development co-operation, as well, must play its role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding alongside the full range of other instruments available to the international community: economic, social, legal, environmental and military.[20]

MEASURING *STATES* AND RECONSTRUCTING ENABLING CONDITIONS

In the following couple of years, OECD produced a series of studies on best practices and guidelines for evaluating aid that slowly moved towards analysing *whole countries* instead of specific (economic) sectors, as requested by donors until then. These studies included *Evaluating Country Programmes*, which acknowledged the need and the reality of an increasing focus on the *state* as the 'the logical unit of account and

[19] Ibid., p. 17.
[20] OECD May 1997, p. 2.

evaluation'.[21] It borrowed from the proposals raised by the 1997 World Bank's *World Development Report* (*WDR*), which suggested both state-dominated and stateless development had failed,[22] and it was, thus, time to invest in 'matching the state's role to its capability'. However, because 'capability is not destiny', the document argued, it was also suggested to 'raise state capability by reinvigorating public institutions.'[23] It seems that as the scope of evaluation changed to the state, several areas were not only included but started to become connected, at least on paper.[24]

The 1997 *WDR*, which influenced the move of OECD towards evaluating *states*, was also the reflection of important changes in the World Bank. The then Bank's president, James Wolfensohn, is pointed out as the person who moved the Bank after 1996 to include political considerations such as corruption in the services offered.[25] In this context, it became possible for the Bank to consider, analyse and act upon situations of conflict and to study how these could be thought in relation to development aid. In the 1998 report *Post-Conflict Reconstruction. The Role of the World Bank*, there are direct proposals to account for how development aid could make conflicts worse, but also to study how it could contribute to peace: 'Reconstruction does not refer only to reconstruction of "physical infrastructure"…What is needed is the reconstruction of the *enabling conditions* for a functioning peacetime society', and the World Bank was coming to offer support to this process.[26] The document also mentioned the creation of the Post-Conflict Unit, in 1997. As seen, 1997 was also the year of the publication of the first *WDI*. It was indeed a time when the Bank was not only investing in refining its approach to development but also, and intrinsically connected, in producing more statistical knowledge about it.

While the OECD started discussions on how to improve evaluation systems, World Bank's *WDI* was first published as a piece in itself, separated from the *WDR*, in 1997, and it purported to promote a new emphasis on development *impacts and outcomes* to help *measuring 'world*

[21] OECD 1999, p. 6.
[22] World Bank 1997b, p. iii.
[23] Ibid., p. 3.
[24] A debate on how these connections were negotiated to become practice and *if* they became practiced *as connected issues* at all can be found, for example, at Patrick and Brown 2007, Desrosiers and Lagassé 19 Dec 2009.
[25] Arndt and Oman 2006, p. 17; World Bank, 'James D. Wolfensohn'.
[26] World Bank 1998, p. 4.

progress in reducing poverty and enriching the lives of people everywhere'.[27] Until 2010, the same *WDI* generated $3 million a year for the Bank. After the Open Data Initiative, it became available for free online, with 50,000 to 60,000 accesses a day.[28] In 13 years, the statistical compilation became not a luxury good produced by the Bank for sell, but a basic threshold to guarantee a top position among knowledge producers. In this context, making the *WDI* available for free and exponentially increasing the access to the database became even more desirable than making profit from it.

> We saw the opportunity of reaching a broader audience and using this data in a better way for development. Our objective is to provide knowledge products that can be useful.'[29]

It is important to understand how this reasoning was formed.

MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS (MFDR)

Going back to 1998, we find the World Bank and OECD redirecting efforts towards more and better evaluation mechanisms, a focus on demonstrable results and aid effectiveness, and increasing attention being drawn to a connection between development and conflict. In November 1999, representatives of both organisations, in addition to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the UN got together to discuss exactly how these proposals could be combined and made mutually helpful. The UK representative to the meeting eloquently stated:

> I am increasingly convinced that improved statistics are key to us meeting the most important challenge facing humanity as we are about to enter a new century and new millennium…I also believe that we live at a time when it is possible to make a massive advance in systematically reducing this poverty. But in order to do this we need to turn the development efforts of the international community from an obsession with inputs and generalised rhetoric about poverty to a clear focus on outputs and year on year measurement of effectiveness in reducing poverty against our agreed targets in each and every country.[30]

The representatives at the meeting generally called for a new international strategy to 'ensure adequate funding and support for national

[27] World Bank 1997a, Foreword. My emphasis.
[28] Interview with Neil Fantom.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Short 3 Nov 1999.

statistical systems', in order for 'developing countries' to plan and monitor poverty reduction and warn the international community of failures in progress.[31] The main goal was to develop a said 'culture' of *Management for Development Results* (MfDR).[32] The outcome was the creation of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21), a consortium to continue the dialogue initiated at the meeting and to promote statistical initiatives.[33] Whether these initiatives actually improved statistical work in recipient countries' offices is beyond the scope of this research. It can be said, however, that the move towards understanding the role of 'better statistics' in development has taken the World Bank and OECD in a sure path towards increasing and intensifying their own statistical production.

With the official establishment of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in 2000, the urge to improve statistics became even more compelling. Following a decade of conferences and summits, the Millennium Declaration was signed on 8 September 2000. The eight MDGs include 'eradicate extreme poverty', 'achieve universal primary education', 'reduce child mortality', among other goals to be achieved by 2015, each with specific targets, such as 'halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1.25 a day' – measurable targets with a timeline.[34] Hence, the MDGs generated a drive to produce precise statistics to monitor progress, achievements and failures. They also became the benchmark to verify which countries were lagging behind.[35]

ADDING SECURITY TO THE BUREAUCRATIC MIX

The beginning of the 2000s saw the move towards connecting security and development and the measurement of development itself becoming increasingly more focused on precise outcomes. Donors were making substantial structural and operational steps in both directions. In 2001, the World Bank established its Operational Policy 2.30 (OP2.30), with

[31] International Monetary Fund 1999.
[32] PARIS21, 'About PARIS21'.
[33] Ibid; Short 3 Nov 1999. See also PARIS21 .
[34] United Nations General Assembly 2000.
[35] This view was corroborated in interviews with Christian Lotz and Sarah Cliffe. The 2011 WDR also discusses this point. See World Bank 2011b, Overview.

guidelines for operations in post-conflict situations. It integrated 'sensitivity to conflict in Bank assistance' and 'recognised' that 'economic and social stability and human security are pre-conditions for sustainable development'. Nevertheless, it still precluded interference in political matters of the recipient countries, direct involvement with peacekeeping, peacemaking or humanitarian relief, and it maintained the need to engage with authorities.[36]

Also in 2001, OECD published the second volume of its guidelines on conflict and development, the *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, which pushed donors further still into a broader consideration of what development and poverty reduction would entail:

> Development agencies now accept the need to work *in* and *on* conflicts rather than *around* them, and make peace-building the main focus when dealing with conflict situations. This is a significant step toward long-term engagement and away from an earlier short-term concentration on post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts.[37]

As mentioned, the World Bank and OECD were slowly moving to a consideration of development as also encompassing efforts to reconstruct not only physical infrastructure, but also the economic and social conditions that would help recipient countries to avoid or to cope with violent conflict. The guidelines in *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* were vague and clearly avoided commitment to peacekeeping or peacemaking: Principles such as 'do no harm', 'widen and deepen dialogue', 'act in timely and flexible ways, and think long term' were broad enough so as to avoid establishing what actions donors would need to take. Even the directive to 'reinforce local capabilities' involved helping local capacities to find solutions (themselves) and suggested any resources should be 'commensurate with absorption capabilities'.[38] The line was thin in this emerging agenda, between acknowledging and acting upon the elements of violence that interfered with development results, gravitating towards acting *only* where violence touched upon the direct practices of development aid.

Nevertheless, and contrasting with OECD's hesitation, in 2002, the World Bank's OP2.30 was reinforced with a structural support, with the

[36] World Bank January 2001.
[37] OECD 2001, p. 17. Emphasis in original.
[38] Ibid., pp.23-4.

creation of the Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) initiative, in a seemly much more assertive move towards the development-plus-security agenda than OECD member states were considering to make. As discussed in chapter one, the LICUS unit was to work together with the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, which denotes the then increasing tendency to combine the themes, at least bureaucratically. The rationale of the LICUS group was that low performers low-income countries could not be completely abandoned; disengagement, the argument went, would lead to 'severe deprivation' and the risk of 'state failure' with regional and global effects.[39] According to its director at the time, Sarah Cliffe, the aim was to separate these countries from others, breaking with the Bank's previous understanding of 'fragile states' as 'just a bit poorer or a bit weaker'.[40] The initiative is seen to have generally responded to two developments: the realisation that the 'fragile states' were lagging behind in the achievement of the MDGs and the increasing perception that the problems of 'fragile states' went much beyond their borders, generating spill-overs and danger to other countries as well.[41]

RANKING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The LICUS initiative also led the way among development agencies in the numerical definition and classification of what would become 'state fragility'. LICUS countries were identified through a threshold in income (GNI below $875 in 2001) and by being at the bottom one-third of the CPIA scores on policy management or service delivery *and* on responsiveness to their citizens.[42] Some countries were classified as LICUS based on extreme low score in the CPIA only, but criteria were vague and by then not yet published. The Bank also separated 'core', 'severe' and 'marginal' LICUS.[43]

In the same month of 2002 when the World Bank published the LICUS *Task Force Report,* which explained the new approach of the Bank and how resources would be allocated to this seemly new category of countries, another document proposed the creation of the Post-Conflict

[39] World Bank Sep 2002, p. iv.
[40] Interview Sarah Cliffe.
[41] Ibid. See also USAID January 2005; World Bank 4 April 2011.
[42] Ibid., p. 3. See also Chauvet and Collier Jan 2004. See Annex 2.
[43] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 22 Dec 2004.

Progress Indicators (PCPI). This would become the Bank's tool to follow events in post-conflict countries and consider developments in the field when deciding on how to allocate resources.[44] The PCPI generated an exceptional form of resource allocation, to assist low-income countries even if they did not fully achieve the Bank's requirements in terms of performance.[45] The establishment of the PCPI and the changes in the classification and quantification of LICUS were happening more or less at the same time. It is said that the idea with the PCPI was to avoid the creation of yet another index (besides the CPIA) while also increasing the 'granularity' of data.[46] For countries encompassed by the PCPI system, common development indicators regarding finances, for example, would not be applicable, but indicators for conflict and violence would be made available.[47] The CPIA was seen as too compact for that purpose; it was necessary to zoom in on 'fragile states'.[48] After all, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the CPIA is meant to measure countries' policy and institutional performance, and although a threshold of 3.2 was established below which states are considered 'fragile', the list was never meant to focus on 'state fragility' only.[49] It seems that the CPIA and the PCPI were slowly paving the way to combine the quantification of development *and* security, while the Bank also made its way in the 'fragile states' agenda.

Interestingly, the PCPI allowed a third, non-official category to exist, that of 'monitored' countries, those whose situation of instability demands international attention but that do not fit the exceptional allocations categories.[50] Coming from many different directions, conflict-affected, poor and unstable countries would slowly and soon gather in the 'fragile states' label.

[44] International Development Association (IDA) 17 Sep 2002, p. 53. The PCPI is also a form of exceptional allocation for 're-engaging countries', those that are not in crisis any more but have been disengaged for a while and now need new access to resources. See Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS) February 2011.
[45] Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS) February 2011.
[46] Interview with Rui Coutinho.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid. The label is used in retrospect in the interview, since at the time the Bank had not yet adopted the nomenclature.
[49] Interview with Rui Coutinho. The issue of whether the CPIA would be fit to measure 'state fragility' is still debated. See Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013.
[50] It is interesting to think how the residual categories, the unallocated 'other', are matched with monitoring.

Still in 2002, development banks' representatives met in Washington, in the first Roundtable on Development Results in the context of PARIS21. The event was entitled *Better Measuring, Monitoring and Managing for Development Results*.[51] The aim was to 'develop results-focused corporate cultures and incentives'.[52] As donors looked at development from a close, there was a perceived need to multiply and refine data on situations then less known and researched in the development sector.

Meanwhile, the OECD was investing in producing guidelines and best-practices for development assistance through specific debates on monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In 2002, it published a 40-pages glossary of key terms in evaluation in three languages.[53] The range of indicators, categories, diagnostics and remedies involved in development aid was becoming exponentially larger, and while quantification and categorisation were intensified and spread, all these elements seem to have been mutually influential: The need to improve aid effectiveness encouraged the move towards understanding the impact of conflict and how it influenced development and vice-versa, and the need to understand these perceived correlations made it necessary to improve statistical production, analysis and circulation. On the other hand, the very technological possibilities and urge to measure that slowly made possible for certain offices and agencies to start producing this data – with the help of PARIS21, for example – led to ever more extensive databases, which contributed to build connections that were not there before.

Indeed, the 2000s brought even more possibilities to the forefront of the development agenda and to what would become the 'fragile states' agenda. In 2004, the second Roundtable on Development Results, in Marrakech, had as one of its speakers the then Advisor on Development Planning and External Coordination in Timor-Leste, Emília Pires, who would become a key figure in the g7+. Her arguments in this presentation are an important mark in my historical sociology: She talked about the first benchmarks or indicators set by the transitional government with the help of

[51] See. PARIS21, 'Conference on Improving Statistics for Measuring Development Outcomes'.
[52] Ibid.
[53] OECD 2002.

international partners in the late 2000s, around a year after Timor-Leste became independent and during the period when the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was the sovereign national authority in the country. According to Pires then, the benchmarks had helped to accelerate reconstruction and allowed the Timorese leadership to manage expectations. However, she made three main critiques to the indicators: They lacked wider ownership, as they had been developed by only a few leaders and donors; they only measured the government, not the donors; and they focused on outputs instead of outcomes, not linked to an 'overall development vision' for the country.[54] A few of these and related points would be mentioned again in a speech in 2008, during the Accra Agenda meeting, as I discuss below. Although these concerns were obviously stronger among those governments that suffered the pressure to achieve results, there was a feeling among many professionals in donor agencies that the approach to development was indeed relying too much on templates and aggregations and that 'capacity' in recipient offices was being spread too thin, overwhelmed by unnecessary requirements.[55]

> Management for results is a good agenda but needs to be implemented well. For me, the single biggest problem is this madness to develop the same framework for everyone. People want certainty and they want to be able to compare countries. I am tired of these things. We ask these countries to do a thousand things that we don't do ourselves! We don't do a medium-term budget. I don't even know what my budget is for the year![56]

Still in 2004, therefore, the World Bank commissioned a guide for practitioners on how to develop and apply a good result-based M&E system.[57] As the document pointed to the possibilities the system was able to generate for development and poverty reduction, it also acknowledged the potential political problems related to the information produced and *how* it was produced:

> Bringing results-based information into the public arena can change the dynamics of institutional relations, budgeting and resource allocations,

[54] Pires 5 Feb 2004. Available at: http://www.mfdr.org/2ndroundtabledocuments.html. Access: 10 April 2014
[55] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Rist and Kusek 2004.

> personal political agendas, and public perceptions of governmental effectiveness.[58]

It goes beyond and also suggests that 'providing such information may lessen or otherwise constrain the number of options available to politicians – leaving them less room to manoeuver in their policies.'[59] On the positive side, the guide suggests M&E can help negotiate and justify priorities and budget requests, show results to citizens and other stakeholders, create and strengthen relations of trust with investors and the population. Around this time, notwithstanding the criticisms, it was clear for recipient governments that they needed to address the technical demand for M&E systems. Donors' reports hardly made secret of these requirements:

> Many countries, particularly the developing countries, must now vie to become a part of international initiatives, organizations, and blocs in order to reap the desired socioeconomic, political, and security benefits. Part of the bargain inevitably involves adhering to a set of specific requirements, conditions, and goals—including monitoring and evaluation.[60]

'FRAGILITY' IN THE MAKING

The following year would intensify debates on how to measure and promote progress in what would officially become known as 'fragile states'. In January 2005, the World Bank, UNDP, European Commission and OECD-DAC held a Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States,[61] when the label started being more often applied and used instead of low-income, LICUS or, in some cases, non-OECD.[62] The year was indeed central in the 'fragile states' agenda.

In March, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held in Paris, borrowing much from the core principles set in the Marrakech roundtable and generating a key development document, the *Paris Declaration*. It proposed donors took 'far-reaching and monitorable actions'

[58] Ibid., p. 21.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. 4.
[61] The LICUS Initiative 2005. See also a few of the background papers for the meetings: ODI 17 Dec 2004; Lockhart [2004].
[62] For a detailed discussion on how the agenda was decided in the realm of OECD-DAC, see Bouchet 2 Dec 2011. For this point, see pp. 18-9, and more in chapter 1, section 1.

to reform the delivery and management of aid, especially in the context of the first five-year review of the progress towards the MDGs.[63] The aim was to understand and increase the impact of aid in 'reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity and accelerating achievement of the MDGs.'[64] Among other key guidelines for aid effectiveness, the *Paris Declaration* suggested the promotion of ownership and mutual accountability. In fact, both ownership and mutual accountability were clearly and officially defined in a way that would be repeated many times thereafter.[65] The document was emphatic about the importance of measuring to manage and specifically mentioned the Managing for Results agenda. It included monitoring as a target in itself: '[to] [r]educe the proportion of countries without transparent and monitorable performance assessment frameworks by one-third,'[66] which logically implied the measurement of what this 'without' was and how many countries there were in this condition.

The following year, the World Bank and OECD published the first issue of a source book on *Emerging Good Practices in Managing for Development Results*.[67] The document already used the 'fragile states' label, based on the draft produced by the 2005 Senior Level Forum. In 2007, as seen in the previous chapter, this draft became the key *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States*,[68] whose principles would be monitored and measured in the following years. The 'fragile states' agenda and the quantifying and classifying reasoning were merging in important ways. A remarkable event at the time was precisely the disclosure of the CPIA ratings for the first time, in 2006.[69] The numbers and the label were becoming part of the same political truth.

[63] OECD 2005/2008, p. 1.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ownership: 'Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions'. Mutual accountability: 'Donors and partners are accountable for results'. Ibid., pp. 3, 8, respectively.
[66] Ibid., p. 10.
[67] OECD and the World Bank 2006.
[68] OECD 2007b.
[69] World Bank, 'Country Policy and Institutional Assessment. Frequently Asked Questions'.

In 2007, the World Bank Institute (WBI) held a roundtable with the title *Because Governance Matters, Measuring it Matters too*, where the focus was on how to balance the opportunities and limitations of using indicators to measure political performance. The bottom line of the arguments in the debate was simple and straight-forward: No indicators will ever be perfect to analyse governance, so how should the problems and limitations be best avoided or managed?[70] These questions would be constantly asked among those doing the quantification of 'state fragility', even more so considering the important impacts of donor numbers in 'fragile states'.

In the same year, the World Bank also turned the focus to 'fragile states' in a more definite way. The Bank published an IDA document that can be seen as a watershed in the agenda: It not only clearly used the 'fragile states' label, but provided analysis of its definition, including uses by other agencies, and made officially clear that 'fragile states' would be those scoring below 3.2 in the harmonised CPIA ratings (which included ratings by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)) or with the presence of a UN or regional mission of peacekeeping or peacebuilding in the previous three years.[71] The CPIA will be discussed later in this chapter. For now, it is important to understand the move done by the Bank: Rui Coutinho, in charge of the CPIA exercise, says the overall debate at the time was about how to have a threshold that would include the countries donors felt needed to get more attention, but without including too many countries, so as to undermine the value of a new classification. In that sense, as one looks into the first events that led to the 3.2 threshold, the circularity is striking: The move to consider just the right number of 'fragile states' led to a selection that, according to Coutinho, very much reflected the definitions and lists already existent, for example, those developed by the AfDB and the ADB.[72] It is established that the 3.2 as a threshold is a *harmonised* average of all scores produced by the three banks. Thus, the currently widespread practical and numerical definition of 'fragile states' was in fact elaborated by looking at which states were

[70] World Bank 2007a, 'Because Governance Matters, Measuring it Matters too'.
[71] World Bank 2007b.
[72] Interview with Rui Coutinho, 12 April 2013.

already considered 'fragile' among key donors – a practical measure, not intended to become a central factor in defining 'fragile states'.

Not that the AfDB or the ADB had officially and numerically applied the label before the World Bank, but because the lowest quintiles of their rankings had the same function of allowing resources to reach 'poor-performers' and could then be used, or rather, were used, to align the definitions of 'fragile states' in terms that would be common to the banks, focusing on aid allocation.

Still in 2007, following the numerical definition of 'fragile states' and the definite adoption of the agenda in the World Bank, as seen in chapter one, the Conflict Prevention Unit and the LICUS Unit were almost merged into a Fragile and Conflict-Affected States Group. In addition, a Conflict, Fragile States and Social Development team was established. In terms of operational changes, the OP8.00 was also established in 2007 to allow the Bank to raise the limits for cost-sharing, increase speed, flexibility and simplicity of procedures in the case of crises and emergencies:

> The Bank recognizes both the inherent risks involved in working in emergencies, including the risks and lost opportunities associated with a delayed response, and the critical importance of speed, flexibility, and simplicity to an effective rapid response.[73]

It is said the response time with this and related operation policies was reduced to eight weeks – 'quick, for an institution this size and with these resources'.[74] These are seen as essential moves towards adapting the Bank's bureaucracy to the needs identified with 'fragile states'. The challenge was how to implement all the technical guidelines and new procedures in terms of M&E and, in addition, apply these with considerations regarding political environments seen as ridden with instability and violence – a sizeable challenge, considering the usual scope of development agencies that far.

As the agenda expanded and gained structural and operational support, its faults and loopholes also became more consequential and, thus, more visible. There was a growing feeling that donors still needed to develop better initiatives to tackle the lack of support to recipient countries

[73] World Bank March 2007.
[74] Interview with Wolfhart Pohl.

in terms of capacity and leadership. Therefore, in 2008, in the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the focus was on how to develop the capacity in recipient countries so that they could engage with M&E by themselves, through improved country systems that would provide enough technical capacity for aid to be disbursed via public mechanisms, instead of side-lining governments. It highlighted the importance of taking into account the *Principles* approved in 2007. The document, thus, emphasised the principle of ownership and the specific guidelines on the use of country systems and building country capacity, all of which had been rather dillutely mentioned in the *Paris Declaration*. In the three years between the two High Level Forums, these specific demands seemed to have increased in importance as demands by recipient offices also mounted. Indeed, the Accra meeting is seen as a milestone, and one specific event in that meeting is often mentioned as a catalytic factor for the future paths the agenda would take. The previous Timorese advisor who had talked about benchmarks and the opportunities and problems of indicators in the 2004 roundtable in Marrakech, Emília Pires, was now the Minister of Finance in Timor-Leste, and the speech she offered in the Accra meeting was faced as a true representative outflow of discontentment from officials in 'fragile states' towards donors' policies and approaches. In the speech, she spoke about being overwhelmed by the presence of more than 250 donor representatives in Timor-Leste at one point, and about the difficulties faced when trying to deal with these many actors while also doing a job hugely challenging in a post-crisis situation.[75]

'FRAGILE STATES' AND THE DEMAND FOR RESULTS

Representatives of 'fragile states' were increasingly demanding to see the results of the aid coordination and effectiveness agenda the donors had been engaging with since the early 2000s. The more the multiplying numbers made clear the reality of the criteria for aid allocation by different agencies, the more open these practices became for critiques as well. In that context, the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

[75] See Barder 11 Sep 2008. Unfortunately, there is no official transcript of the speech itself. However, the same content here described was also mentioned by Leigh Mitchell, Christian Lotz and a high-profile anonymous interviewee (Anonymous 2).

(IDPS) was created, hosted by OECD's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), with the stated aim of opening a dialogue with 'fragile states'.[76]

The expressed goal of OECD-INCAF was to work with whole-of-government approaches and engage with multiple kinds of actors.[77] In 2009, it started an exercise to monitor the application of the *Principles*, the *Fragile States Principles Monitoring Survey*. During the Accra meeting, six 'fragile states' volunteered as pilot countries, among them DRC and Timor-Leste, which would soon lead the initiative to create the g7+.[78]

By the following year, however, it seems there was an increasing willingness of 'fragile states'' representatives to find or found their own space. In 2010, the first official meeting of IDPS was held, perhaps not coincidentally in Dili, Timor-Leste. It is said it was from this meeting and the expressed interest of many representatives of 'fragile states' present that the g7+ was created, mentioned for the first time in what was called the *Dili Declaration*.

In 2011, during the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, the group and its main proposals were consolidated, and a *New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States* (hereafter, *New Deal*) was proposed under the auspices of IDPS but with the lobby and leadership of the g7+. In Accra, the OECD had sponsored a meeting of 'fragile states'' representatives, but this was regarded as a somehow mediated event.[79] On the contrary, in Busan, the meeting between representatives of 'fragile states' was closed-doors, although sponsored and assisted by OECD-INCAF and a few donor agencies.[80] In that meeting, Timor-Leste, Liberia and the DRC led the movement to officially establish the g7+.

In the Dili Declaration, the group had stated that 'without security there [could] be no development'. It also asked for more ownership, simplified procedures and untied assistance. Crucially, it welcomed what was perceived by representatives as a platform for 'fragile states'.

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[76] See International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 'About the International Dialogue'.
[77] INCAF [2009].
[78] OECD 2010b.
[79] Interview with Leigh Mitchell.
[80] Interview with Vanessa Wyeth. The International Peace Institute gave support to the convenor of the meeting, the government of Liberia in the person of Amina, in terms of logistics and background papers.

> We believe fragile states are characterized and classified through the lens of the developed rather than through the eyes of the developing; and that in order to make long lasting change and implement the principles of good engagement; the national context must guide each distinctive path to sustainable development…Although we all accept international standards, the donor community must be aware of our conditions and needs. That is why, we must give ourselves a transitional period to reinforce our capabilities and systems and not have complex and slow procedural requirements and conditions imposed upon us.[81]

The increasing *formal* dialogue between donors and 'fragile states' was creating more demands: The more the World Bank and OECD explored the agenda, looking for correlations between variables, solutions and new methods of evaluation, the more the recipient governments started to ask for in terms of ownership, accountability and effectiveness, because with clear*er* targets in the international agenda, the easier it became to find holes and failures not only in the policies of 'fragile states', but in those of donors as well. Moreover, these failures also became measurable, and donors were slowly showing awareness of this fact.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

The World Bank's *World Development Report* in 2011 was a reflection of that debate. Its focus was on *conflict, security and development* and on how to understand and act upon the connections between these themes in a way as to acknowledge the efforts and leadership of recipient countries. It discussed the existence and pledges of the g7+ and the need to change bureaucratic procedures. The 2011 *WDR* also mirrored the g7+'s concern with security, justice and jobs,[82] issues that would become part of the group's agenda.[83]

The follow-up document, *Operationalizing the 2011 World Development Report*, suggested the World Bank positioned 'fragility, conflict, and violence at the core of its development mandate'. It announced the creation of a 'center of excellence' on 'fragile' and conflict-affected states, the Center on Conflict, Security and Development (CCSD), with offices in Nairobi and Washington, both of which opened doors in 2012.[84]

[81] g7+ 2010, p. 4.
[82] Ibid., p. 11.
[83] Democratic Republic of Congo 27 November 2013, p. 4.
[84] See World Bank, 'Working Differently in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations'.

These offices were to guide the Bank in the formation of a *knowledge platform* on 'state fragility' and conflict, to be made accessible to a wide range of professionals in headquarters and in the field, in the form of training courses, webinars and remote help-desk.[85] To build this knowledge, the document proposed a new results metrics: 'To monitor progress in FCS, the Bank will develop results metrics that are sensitive to conflict and fragility, using a combination of objective data, governance progress indicators, and stakeholder perception surveys.'[86]

Around the same time, the OECD was also making adaptations official and regulating a 'fit for use' approach to data. It argued for a 'multi-faceted' understanding of the quality of data, to be adapted to the place, time and need of users.[87] This idea of 'fitness for use' or 'fitness of purpose' had been discussed before in another OECD document, in 2008;[88] however, the approach seemed to become the standard practice around 2011. The 'fitness for use' reasoning followed and was followed by other ideas of limitation in data collection and analysis. This understanding will be central for a discussion on 'good enough' data and policies in the next chapter. For now, it is important to highlight that this reasoning became largely seen by the governments of 'fragile states' as highly problematic, since 'good enough data' was also the basis for the allocation of important and much sought resources.

In this spirit, the g7+'s much cherished *New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States* is based on a set of tools that aim at 'fragile states' developing their own measures and targets, to avoid the many harmful donors assessments seen to be incompatible with a context of 'state fragility'. The *New Deal* was signed by 35 countries, the World Bank, AfDB, ADB, EU, OECD and UN.[89] It soon became part of the international dialogue on 'fragile states' by advancing a quite heavy-worded message:

> The current ways of working in fragile states need serious improvement. Despite the significant investment and the commitments of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), results and value for money have been modest. Transitioning out of fragility is long, [a] political work that requires *country leadership and*

[85] World Bank 4 April 2011.
[86] Ibid., p. vi.
[87] Statistical Directorate 17 Jan 2012, p. 7.
[88] OECD and European Commission 2008.
[89] g7+, 'Who has endorsed the New Deal?'.

> *ownership*. Processes of political dialogue have often failed due to lack of trust, inclusiveness, and leadership. International partners can often bypass national interests and actors, providing aid in overly technocratic ways that underestimate the importance of harmonising with the national and local context, and support short-term results at the expense of medium- to long-term sustainable results brought about by building capacity and systems. A *New Deal* for engagement in fragile states is necessary.[90]

The message can be seen to have four pillars: emphasis on ownership, a demand for the adaptation of bureaucratic techniques to the context of 'fragile states', a commitment to capacity building and long-term engagement. The group would act in three fronts in order to get this message through: it has been lobbying the UN to have security indicators included in the post-2015 agenda; it has also been piloting their own Fragility Assessment and Spectrum to define new common and specific indicators of progress; and it has been engaging with donors to have them sign compacts that would take the *New Deal* into account (all discussed ahead).

The bottom line of these initiatives is a profound discontentment and concern with the impact of measurements done by outsiders and with the perceived overwhelming technical character of these exercises, which are said to leave aside crucial contextual considerations. In the case of 'fragile states', as acknowledged by the g7+ itself, this concern is not limited to the lack of consultation of the governments involved, but is also very much based on the recognition that national statistical offices in many cases cannot provide their own numbers to counter those produced by donors. Hence, the g7+'s emphasis on building capacity and the initiative to develop their own measurement tools. In that sense, the quantifying and classifying reasoning that composed and was composed *with* the 'fragile states' agenda has also contributed to re-shuffle the agenda. When 'fragile states' turn numbers into tools – or arms – quantification becomes a crucial point of departure for questions of power; and so this thesis argues.

1.2. THE CIRCULARITY IN THE MERGE

So far in this chapter, I sought to show how the measuring of 'state fragility' became a circular exercise, where 'fragile states' are constantly composed

[90] g7+, 'A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States'. Emphasis in original.

by measurable features, as donors advance over indicators they can build and measure, and at the same time, as 'fragile states' are composed, new insights over their perceived characteristics lead to more research and statistical analysis to find correlations. In that circularity, the broad correlation between development and security became increasingly studied by staff in development agencies, efforts to reduce poverty and augment aid effectiveness led to a massive increase in data production and 'fragile states' turned into highly 'categorisable' and 'rankable' political realities. In that context, 'fragile states', in the form of the g7+, have proposed to counter this quantification and classification with their own numerical methods and to contribute to their development in their own ways. The next section seeks to exemplify the discontentment with donors' measurements and their impacts by looking at the specific case of the CPIA and its implications. I show some key modifications made to the CPIA and related exercises in order to adapt to the merge of the 'fragile states' agenda and the quantifying and classifying reasoning. I use the case of Timor-Leste as example at certain points in the discussion. The idea is to follow the historical sociology in this section with a detailed example of how modifications influenced by the referred merge were implemented and with which impacts.

2. THE WORLD BANK'S CPIA: 'STATE FRAGILITY' IS UNDER THE THRESHOLD

The following discussion should shed light into the implications and relevance of rankings and broader classifying practices in terms of resource allocation, leverage and reputation for the countries concerned. This discussion also depicts a diffuse, virtual and indirect exchange between donors' and their critics, exemplified specifically by the IDA replenishments, which are key processes whereby changes are proposed regarding the focus of the World Bank's IDA 'fund for the poor', consequently, leading to changes in the CPIA rating system that provides its basis. The CPIA is, of course, only one form of classification, with specific practices and results, but it is highly important for the 'fragile states' agenda. In fact, as seen, besides being largely known, the World Bank's CPIA is also perhaps the

most widely reproduced index of 'state fragility' in terms of its implications for policy decisions.[91]

The IDA replenishments are usually conducted by the World Bank around every three years to decide on modifications on the available funds, the eligibility criteria and the formulae related to resource allocation. The IDA offers concessional funds with the stated priority of reducing poverty,[92] however, this funding is much lower than the one available for IBRD borrowing countries:[93] In 2013, the IBRD lending totalled $15 billion, while IDA funding for *33* 'fragile states'[94] from FY07-12 was $11.5 billion. In the same period, IDA funding for 31 non-'fragile states' was of $32.9 billion.[95]

The demand is much higher than the supply for 'fragile states'. Hence, ratings such as those in CPIA can be crucial to receive valuable resources. In the following I arrange four main themes that help understanding the critiques to and the changes in the system in the last few years. The fifth sub-section provides my own overview of the most recent criteria, formulae and their implications.

2.1. RE-WORKING INDICATORS, FORMULAE AND CRITERIA: THE MECHANISMS OF AID ALLOCATION

In order to briefly locate the discussion, it is important to first give an overview of how the current CPIA classification system allocates resources: the system attributes scores according to countries' performances in policy and institutional areas whose measurement is based on 16 indicators

[91] Alexander 2010, p. 7, footnote 3. See also Sending and Neumann 2011.
[92] International Development Association (IDA) October 2012. See also International Development Association (IDA) 2013.
[93] IBRD is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – like IDA, one of the five institutions composing the World Bank Group. The mechanisms to determine credit-worthiness are beyond the scope of this analysis, but details can be found at World Bank, 'IBRD. Frequently Asked Questions': 'IBRD clients are middle-income and credit-worthy lower income countries…Only a minority of middle-income countries can be regarded as established bond market borrowers able to access the market regularly at a stable cost. Other countries within the group have only sporadic access or none at all. Therefore, the majority of middle-income countries continue to rely on IBRD to mobilize investments.'
[94] The 2013 IEG report actually uses the label 'fragile and conflict-affected states' for ODA flows, but this change has not been largely applied in the Bank yet. The IDA17 uses also 'fragile situations' when approaching topics that can be extended to territories as well, such as post-conflict demobilisation (International Development Association (IDA) March 2013). This allows the Bank to include West Gaza and Palestine, for example, as explained in interview by the former director of the CCSD, Gary Milante.
[95] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013, p. viii. IDA also funds non-'fragile states' that are not credit-worthy for IBRD, such as post-conflict countries, countries in the process of re-engagement and small islands.

distributed into four clusters: Economic Management, Structural Policies, Policies for Social Inclusion/Equity, and Public Sector Management and Institutions (A to D, respectively). Indicators in each cluster are rated from 1 to 6, from 'bad' to 'good' performance, and scores are averaged to provide cluster scores and a total score for each country.[96] Countries whose total score falls below 3.2 are classified as 'fragile states'.

The most recently proposed formula for IDA allocation based on the CPIA ratings stands as

$$PBA_i = \frac{CPR_i^5 * Pop_i \ * (GNI\ per\ capita)_i^{-0.125}}{\sum_{i=1}^{N}[CPR_i^5 * Pop_i \ * (GNI\ per\ capita)_i^{-0.125}]} * IDA\ Envelope$$

FIGURE 1: WORLD BANK'S PERFORMANCE-BASED ALLOCATION (PBA)SYSTEM AS OF IDA17[97]

The CPR is the Country Performance Rating, which is calculated as follows:

Country Performance	$CPR = 0.24CPIA_{A-C} + 0.68CPIA_D + 0.08PPR$

FIGURE 2: WORLD BANK'S COUNTRY PERFORMANCE RATING (CPR), AS OF IDA17[98]

The weights given for cluster A-C and D are 24 and 68 percent, respectively; while 8 percent is allocated to the portfolio performance rating (PPR). The PPR is measured according to the percentage of '*projects at risk*' and the age of the portfolio.[99] However, the IDA17 (reads 'IDA seventeenth replenishment exercise'), in 2013, proposed to reduce the exponent of the CPR in the PBA formula to 4 with the stated goal of increasing focus on poverty reduction (discussed ahead).[100] The IDA Resource Allocation Index (IRAI) uses the CPIA ratings to allocate resources, thus, classifying and ranking 'fragile states' (figures 3 and 4 below), even if the system was not created for these exact purposes, as discussed.

[96] For clusters and more information on criteria, see Annex 2.
[97] International Development Association (IDA) March 2013, p. 46, Annex 5.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., p. 45.
[100] Ibid., pp. 26-7. The 16 IDA criteria can be found in Annex 2.

Summary Table: 2011 IDA Resource Allocation Index (IRAI) a/
(Countries listed in Alphabetical Order)

No.	Country	A. Economic Management				B. Structural Policies				C. Policies for Social Inclusion/Equity						D. Public Sector Management and Institutions						IDA Resource Allocation Index (IRAI)
		1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11		12	13	14	15	16		
		Monet. & Exch. Rate Policies	Fiscal Policy	Debt Policy and Mgt.	Ave.	Trade	Financial Sector	Business Regulatory Environ.	Ave.	Gender Equality	Equity of Public Resource Use	Building Human Resour.	Social Protection & Labor	Pol. & Instit. for Environ. Sustain.	Ave.	Property Rights & Rule-based Govern.	Quality of Budget. & Finan. Mgt.	Effic.of Revenue Mobil.	Quality of Public Admin.	Transpar., Account. & Corrup.in Pub. Sec.	Ave.	
1	AFGHANISTAN	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	1.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.7
2	ANGOLA	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.0	2.7	3.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.3	2.7
3	ARMENIA	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.7	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.5	3.0	4.0	3.5	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.6	4.1
4	BANGLADESH	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	2.5	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.9	3.3
5	BENIN	4.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.3	3.5
6	BHUTAN	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.2	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.3	4.0	4.5	4.5	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.5	3.9	3.9
7	BOLIVIA	3.5	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.5	3.5	2.5	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	2.5	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.5	3.2	3.6
8	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.6
9	BURKINA FASO	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.5	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8
10	BURUNDI	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.2	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.2	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.4	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.0	2.7	3.1
11	CAMBODIA	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	2.5	2.0	2.8	3.4
12	CAMEROON	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.9	3.2
13	CAPE VERDE	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.8	4.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5	3.5	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0
14	CENTRAL AFR. REP.	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	3.0	2.6	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.8
15	CHAD	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.2	2.4
16	COMOROS	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.7
17	CONGO, DEM. REP.	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.2	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.7
18	CONGO, REP	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.6	3.0
19	COTE D'IVOIRE	3.5	3.0	2.0	2.8	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.9
20	DJIBOUTI	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.2	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.8	3.2
21	DOMINICA	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.5	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.8
22	ERITREA	2.0	2.0	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.0	2.0	1.5	3.5	2.5	3.5	2.0	2.0	2.7	2.5	2.0	3.5	3.0	2.0	2.6	2.2
23	ETHIOPIA	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.2	3.0	4.0	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.5
24	GAMBIA, THE	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5	4.0	4.0	2.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.2	3.5
25	GEORGIA	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.7	6.0	3.5	5.5	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	3.0	4.2	3.5	4.0	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	4.4
26	GHANA	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.5	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.9	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.9
27	GRENADA	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.3	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.5	3.5	4.0	3.9	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.7
28	GUINEA	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.8	4.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.6	2.9
29	GUINEA-BISSAU	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	4.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.8
30	GUYANA	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.0	2.5	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.0	3.3
31	HAITI	4.0	3.5	2.5	3.3	4.0	3.0	2.5	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.6	2.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.9
32	HONDURAS	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.7	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.6	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.6
33	INDIA	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.7	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7
34	KENYA	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.7	2.5	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.8
35	KIRIBATI	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.8	2.5	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.3	3.0
36	KOSOVO	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.5	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.1	3.0	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.4

FIGURE 3: 2011 IDA RESOURCE ALLOCATION INDEX (IRAI)[101]

HARMONIZED LIST OF FRAGILE SITUATIONS FY15 a/

Country	WB CPIA Score	ADB/AfDB CPIA Score	Harmonized Average	Political and Peace- Building Missions b/	Peace-keeping Missions c/
IDA Eligible					
Afghanistan	2.650	2.842	2.7	P	Pk
Burundi	3.242	3.409	3.3	P	
Central African Republic	2.500	2.262	2.4	P	
Chad	2.600	3.247	2.9		
Comoros	2.758	2.392	2.6		
Congo, DR	2.883	3.290	3.1		Pk
Cote d'Ivoire	3.183	3.342	3.3		Pk
Eritrea	1.992	1.933	2.0		
Guinea-Bissau	2.525	2.644	2.6	P	
Haiti	2.833	-	2.8		Pk
Kiribati	2.908	2.983	2.9		
Kosovo	3.592	-	3.6		Pk
Liberia	3.125	3.492	3.3		Pk
Madagascar	3.017	3.162	3.1		
Mali	3.383	3.775	3.6		Pk
Marshall Islands	2.642	2.967	2.8		
Micronesia, FS	2.692	2.883	2.8		
Myanmar	2.950	-	3.0		
Sierra Leone	3.267	3.447	3.4	P	
Solomon Islands	2.933	3.308	3.1		
Somalia	-	1.104	1.1	P	
South Sudan	2.092	2.279	2.2		Pk
Sudan	2.358	2.620	2.5		Pk
Togo	2.967	3.093	3.0		
Tuvalu	2.767	3.050	2.9		
Yemen	2.992	-	3.0		
Territories					
West Bank & Gaza	-	-		P	
Blend					
Timor-Leste	3.058	3.317	3.2		Pk
Zimbabwe	2.258	2.173	2.2		
Middle Income					
Bosnia & Herzegovina	-	-	-	P	
Iraq	-	-	-	P	
Libya	-	-	-	P	
Sytia	-	-	-	P	

Notes:
a/ "Fragile Situations" have: either a) a harmonized average CPIA country rating of 3.2 or less, or b) the presence of a UN and/or regional peace-keeping or peace-building mission during the past three years. This list includes only IDA eligible countries and non-member or inactive territories/countries without CPIA data. IBRD countries with CPIA ratings below 3.2 do not qualify on this list due to non disclosure of CPIA ratings; IBRD countries that are included here qualify only by the presence of a peacekeeping, political or peace-building mission - and their CPIA ratings are thus not disclosed.
b/ Specifically defined as the presence of a UN and/or regional (e.g. AU, EU, OAS) peace-building and political mission in this country in the last three years. [sources: UN DPKO website, AU website, EC website].
c/ Specifically defined as the presence of a UN and/or regional (e.g. AU, EU, OAS, NATO) peace-keeping operation in this country in the last three years, *with the exclusion of border monitoring operations.* [Sources: UN DPKO website, AU website, EC website, OSCE website].

FIGURE 4: 'HARMONIZED LIST OF FRAGILE SITUATIONS FY15'[102]

[101] World Bank [2012]. This is the most recent table available.

In the most recent exercise, the bureaucratic routine to determine these numbers works in constant back and forth. The process for rating starts with a benchmarking exercise, currently conducted for 20 countries. This initial exercise produces the guidelines for 'normal rating'. In a second step, staff on the field rate their countries from 1 to 6 (non-integer marks are allowed, such as 2.5, 3.5) according to the respective sectors in which their expertise is located (Education, Health and so on). Following this, the same staff consult ('propose', they say) local authorities, and finally write justifications ('write-ups') to accompany their ratings back to the chief-economist in each Region in the headquarters, in Washington. The ratings and write-ups are checked for consistency inside the Region, forwarded to the person in charge of the CPIA exercise (currently, at Operational Policy and Country Services, OPCS), who send them to the Networks (Education, Sector and so on) to be checked for internal consistency and 'calibrated' across regions in each sector (for example, Gender). The Networks send the documents back to the director in OPCS, who forwards them again to the Regions. They respond to the Networks' comments and the ratings go finally back to OPCS.[103] This process is seen by staff as almost a 'turf war' between Regions and Networks, involving much internal contestation and disagreement.[104]

These precise disputes are beyond the scope of this discussion, but one can suppose they come exactly from the fact that ratings are originally subjective exercises, based on 'write-ups', that is, supported by allegedly extensive but quite subjective justifications. Accordingly, it is also natural for critics to question the lack of transparency in the exercise, as the write-ups,

[102] World Bank 2014a. Here an important caveat is in order: As mentioned, it is known that in certain contexts, the World Bank adopts the 'fragile situations' terminology instead of 'fragile states', to be able to include territories, such as Palestine. With the *Harmonized List*, however, this does not seem to be the case. The Bank released an 'information note' that explains the purposeful use of 'situations' for the terminology itself: 'While the original intent of the list was a monitoring tool to guide Bank engagement with clients with unique development challenges, it has been acknowledged…that definitions built on the CPIA and peacekeeping missions are insufficient to the task. The current direction of analysis underpinning the fragility list aims to include more multi-dimensional approaches to identifying fragile situations so as to provide better guidance of relevance to the wider Bank group'. The 'situations' nomenclature had so far been used only in the context when an average was sought in relation to the scores produced by other banks; now it seems the World Bank is leaning towards a more widespread use of this terminology in its IDA exercises, but this has not yet been concretised in other tools or publications. See World Bank 2014b.

[103] This explanation is diffuse in IDA documents but were summarised in interview by Rui Coutinho.

[104] Interview with Khadija Sheik.

fundamental in this rating process, are actually not published. Rui Coutinho, who is in charge of the exercise, justifies the confidentiality with a practical explanation: 'The write-ups add to a couple of thousand pages and by the time they were published we would have initiated the new exercise.' In addition, he says, the ratings are discussed with the respective national authorities twice, one in the 'proposal' by staff in the country and another at the end, after the final rating is achieved.[105] This seems to be the extent of this exchange.

The formulae and the exercise, therefore, are currently still perceived as highly problematic, 'a substitute for political negotiations',[106] but they are already much changed in what regards their initial features. These changes are important in that they reflect the practical pressures in the game, the possibilities for manoeuvring among them and, crucially, their consideration is in tandem with the overall proposition in this research of looking at change, rather than *assuming* continuity.

ANTECEDENTS OF A COMPLICATED QUANTIFYING SYSTEM

In 1998, the CPIA was articulated for the first time as *the* basis of a performance-based allocation system in the World Bank. The stated objective was to systematically focus on performance but to also account for needs, capabilities and access to other sources of finance. At this stage, in IDA12, much of the very application of the formula relied on subjective judgment, even more than currently seen: For post-conflict countries, for example, situations were analysed and considered in an *ad hoc* and unofficial way. There was one form only of including some official weight to the limitations derived from crises and violence, through a '*projects at risk*' measure, which had a 20 percent weight in the IDA rating.[107] At the time, these 'projects at risk' also included '*potential risk*', thus, the situations of crisis can be said to have been indirectly accounted for, so long as staff involved interpreted the 'right' amount of risk and explained this accordingly, which, of course, can be seen as highly problematic.

[105] Interview with Rui Coutinho.
[106] Sending and Neumann 2011, p. 244.
[107] International Development Association (IDA) 23 Dec 1998, p. 34.

In 2002, in IDA13, seemly responding to increasing demands for more transparency, the Bank published more elements of the formula for the CPIA ratings and IDA allocation. Two new factors were implemented, the age of the portfolio, to avoid penalising young portfolios in terms of results achieved, and a percentage calculation for 'projects at risk' that was *commensurate* with CPIA ratings, which made possible for this factor to be introduced in the CPIA calculation.[108] This calculation was also made clear*er* for the first time, although not very detailed. The document stated that there was an effort to achieve consistency in ratings within and across regions, with the support of detailed questions and guides with *typical ratings* for specific situations, achieved through *pre-established benchmarks*. The country ratings offered were vaguely said to be then 'institutionally' verified at the end.[109]

In the following exercise, IDA14 (2005), the CPIA ratings were finally disclosed (effective in 2006) and an IDA Results Monitoring System (RMS) was proposed to track the progress towards the MDGs. These initiatives only gained some operational viability, however, in IDA15 (2007), when the Bank engaged directly with the 'fragile states' agenda. The new document provided an analysis of different definitions used, arguing for an interpretation of 'state fragility' as a continuum, and creating sub-categories to be used in financing – 'deteriorating', 'prolonged crisis or impasse', 'post-conflict or peace-building transitions', and 'gradual improvement', each with its specific characteristics and respective strategies for assistance.[110] It also addressed *the 3.2 threshold*, but the document did not justify the choice of this rating for cut-off. In addition, 'fragile states' were approached as a group that was alarmingly lagging behind in the MDGs. Thus, the document also discusses the need to adapt the Bank's understanding of the risk-rewards trade-off for 'fragile states', stating that

> [o]n the one hand, their weak institutions mean that the probability of successful outcomes for aid-financed programs is lower than in more strongly performing environments…On the other, their high deficit with respect to MDGs means that where country programs – including those financed from aid – are successful, their development impact can be very

[108] Ibid., Annex 1.
[109] Ibid.
[110] World Bank 2007b, p. 13.

> significant at the margin because these countries start from a low baseline.[111]

In parallel to these changes and as the formulae and calculations were made clearer, the critiques became more specific. A 2008 study commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development emphasised the impact of the *margin of error* in such small intervals as those precisely in the middle of the ranking, hence, between ratings 3 and 4, where the cut-off for defining 'fragile states' is situated.[112] The document comments yet on the *subjective decision* made by staff in balancing external factors that impacted country's performance when attributing their ratings; however, it points to the fact that, as the external factors have hardly any weight in a formula concerned with policies, this has minimum impact.[113]

In my view, it is strikingly ironic, nonetheless, that the only form of accounting for outcomes as influenced by external uncontrollable factors is through country team staff's *perceptions* of these in a system that is supposed to both measure performance and be objectively quantitative. This is made even more problematic when staff in the field can be in charge of many different countries simultaneously. A country team officer tells of the pressure to write justifications ('write-ups') for his ratings, even though the number of countries (s)he is in charge of exceeds his/her said capacity to actually visit all of them.[114]

> They ask questions that come to us, the country offices, when justifications are not strong enough, when data and scores are not seen as compatible. We have 13 countries and I haven't been to all of them, but institutionally we are required to write assessments about all of them and collect valuable information.[115]

In the IDA16 (2011), changes to this bureaucratic process were proposed. There was a stated objective to reduce aid volatility, with changes to some aspects of the functional form and simplification of the methodology for IDA allocation.[116] There was a quite straight-forward explanation to the exercise itself that indeed looked like a direct response

[111] Ibid., 5.
[112] For the discussion on the margin of error, see Steets 2008, pp. 19-21.
[113] Ibid., p. 31.
[114] Anonymised information.
[115] Ibid.
[116] World Bank May 2010, p. 1.

(and an absolutely non-apologetic one for that matter) to critiques regarding the ranking of countries: 'Given that IDA's resource allocation system is a *zero-sum-game*…the PBA formula measures a country's own performance relative to those of all other IDA countries.'[117] It was a practical decision and one linked to the limitation of resources; there was no expressed concern with the ranking as such.

Nevertheless, the IDA17 (2013) proposes to reduce the exponent of the Country Performance Rating (CPR) from 5 to 4 (see formula above) to allow increasing allocation for IDA 'fragile states' in detriment of IDA non-'fragile states', which would also see allocation move from stronger to weaker performers. The document highlights, however, that the focus of the Bank would still be on high performance, thus, the top quintile countries would still see per-capita allocations more than twice of those in the lowest quintile.[118]

The declared overwhelming concern with performance and governance over the needs of 'fragile states', that is, the very priorities of these governments, is in fact one of the main substantial critiques long addressed to the CPIA exercise. In fact, this is combined with a view that the CPIA does not efficiently take into account the external factors, such as crisis and violence, which can affect performance.

2.2. PERFORMACE VS. NEEDS AND THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE

In the IDA12 replenishment, in 1998, the Bank made firm commitment to focus on governance and performance. The IDA12 cited researches on the link between good governance and aid effectiveness,[119] and in the interest of achieving the best ratio investment-results, the Bank clearly stated its purpose to privilege good performers. Thus, the World Bank would increasingly be criticised for attributing too much *weight to governance* and institutions through the CPIA ratings. Mostly, critics accused the Bank of, with its strong focus on governance, creating a kind of '*punitive bias*' that

[117] Ibid., p.2. My emphasis.
[118] Ibid., p. iii.
[119] Dollar and Pritchett 1998. It became the oft-cited basis for the Bank's rationale that aid could only produce growth and reduce poverty if good policies and institutions were in place. This was later discredited by and IEG evaluation of the CPIA. For a discussion, see Alexander 2010.

was counterproductive and affected precisely those countries that needed aid the most: 'Policy-performance based allocations equally shift the priorities of interventions away from poverty reduction and the need for sustainable human development.'[120]

In IDA13 (2002), the Bank changed its discourse and proposed a renewed focus on outcomes and results and the monitoring of progress towards the MDGs, as part of an increased focus on *poverty reduction*. For this purpose, the Bank created the much debated Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which, together with the existent Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), would provide a refined analysis of a country's initial scenario, allowing for better planning and monitoring of progress.[121] The CAS was already in use to determine risks, goals and indicators for each project, with an overview of the country's situations. The PRSPs were supposed to add an element of ownership, since the strategy for poverty reduction would be aligned with the country's own priorities and plans, as stated in national strategic papers.[122] In addition, re-directing some attention to the external factors frequently pointed as lacking in the Bank's analyses, the IDA13 introduced the Post-Conflict Performance Indicators (PCPI), which opened the possibility to evaluate performance in the special conditions of post-conflict and re-engagement countries. For access to these exceptional allocations, eligible countries would a) have been disengaged with IDA due to crisis; b) have had experienced short but severe conflict, with disruption of IDA involvement; and/or c) be a new sovereign state just emerging. Once deemed eligible, countries were evaluated according to the number of casualties in the conflict, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) and the extent of physical destruction. Nevertheless, the document acknowledged the difficulty of getting hold of data in such contexts and recognised that much of this analysis would have to rely on subjective judgment of staff.[123]

At this point, critiques suggested the PRSPs were not tailored enough for the needs and specific context of 'fragile states'. In fact, although the PSPRs were supposed to be linked to national priorities, and

[120] Kararach, Kedir et al. December 2012, p. 2.
[121] These documents mark the beginning of engagement with recipient countries and set the parameters for proposed budget and projects.
[122] International Development Association (IDA) 17 Sep 2002.
[123] Ibid., Annex 2.

therefore, be country-specific, the PRSPs annually presented similar focuses and goals. Even staff members in the Bank suggest there was *too much* consistency across the regions:

> The first generation of PRSPs all had Education and Health as priorities. The second generation focused on private sectors. Has the world agreed to the same objectives at the same time? It is a mix of many things. Sometimes they [government officials] really believe in these objectives, sometimes they want more money or hope to work here [in the World Bank].[124]

The IDA13 is indeed careful in phrasing how PRSPs would be helping decide resource allocation:

> Early experience shows that countries' strategies have often given insufficient weight to issues that are important for sustainable development, such as the role of women, environmental management, fiduciary controls, and analysis of the social impacts of policy reforms. While recognizing that the PRSP is a country-owned document, Deputies reaffirmed that IDA should continue to advocate good policies.[125]

Moreover, the PRSPs would have three pillars: Prioritising public actions; managing resources with efficiency, transparency and accountability; and *establishing M&E of progress*. Hence, considering the Bank's priorities and stated concerns, it is quite an understandable initiative for recipient countries to delineate national priorities that more or less showed enough conformity to these plans so as to guarantee some resources.

This perceived lack of ownership would be an increasing and powerful critique towards the Bank's approach to 'fragile states' in the years to follow. The PRSPs were accused of being an expansion and repetition of the Structural Adjustments Programs (SAP) of the 1980s. The PRSPs' stated focus on poverty reduction and good governance were seen as new clothes to old programmes. Moreover, critics accused the World Bank and IMF, with whom the Bank partnered for the PRSPs, of imposing priorities rather than obeying to the ownership principle the PRSPs were supposed to follow.[126] Tellingly, the PRSPs were accompanied by a 1,260-pages sourcebook, covering absolutely all possible topics and providing matrices

[124] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[125] International Development Association (IDA) 17 Sep 2002, p. 11.
[126] Abugre June 2000; Malaluan and Guttal Jan 2003; Cornwall and Brock 2006.

with specific policies and timelines for action. A World Bank's officer describes an interesting situation (s)he lived in Timor-Leste:

> Once I asked: 'do you really want that matrix?'. The person said: 'there are twelve donors here, it's easier if I just agree.'[127]

There were hardly any alternatives that would be very different from those guidelines if a PRSP was to be approved; most recipient governments were either unwilling or (technically) incapable of taking a different path from those indirectly outlined. '[C]ountries that have been through past structural adjustment regimes and are now preparing PRSPs know what the Bank and the Fund want to see in such documents.'[128] There were other important obstacles to 'true ownership': Malaluan and Guttal point, for example, to the issue of language, as most PRSPs were not translated to the local language and, thus, were inaccessible to most local communities and NGOs, and made work more difficult even for senior officers.[129]

> In one meeting, all were there, so smart, self-confident, and the vice-president was reading the documents following lines with her finger! She is smart, don't get me wrong, but it's English, it's not her language.[130]

Facing so many critiques, in the next IDA replenishment exercise, the IDA14 (2005), the Bank started important changes by a basic point of departure: The CPIA ratings were disclosed and the rating system was finally detailed. The IDA14 document explains how IDA decided on which projects to support as part of the PRSPs: The PRSPs would be reflected on the Country Performance Rating (CPR), since the PRSPs' projects and goals would be analysed for the CPR formula (see formula on p. 114), and the CPIA would indicate areas where attention was needed, thus, influencing IDA allocation.[131] The bureaucracy was immensely intertwined, virtually untraceable and yet, highly consequential for IDA allocations to 'fragile states'.

[127] Interview with Anonymous 1. See the sourcebook, World Bank, 'PRSP Sourcebook: Chapter and Annexes'.
[128] Ibid., p. 8.
[129] Malaluan and Guttal Jan 2003.
[130] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[131] Ibid., p. 48.

Being so, the CPIA ratings were seen as a form of indirect or *ex ante* conditionality: 'Instead of trying to induce governments to reform or create reformers, donors select genuine reformers and provide them with financing.'[132] Considering the history of the previous impacts of SAPs' conditionalities, many of such critiques were widespread by then. While some, as seen, criticised the overall focus of the Bank on performance, others in fact concluded that what was being evaluated was the formal *existence of tools, not the efficiency of policies*. In a 2005 document, the Agence Française de Développement highlights and criticises especially the fact that the CPIA ratings did not account for outcomes, focusing only on policies and institutions. In that way, it was argued, efforts to improve performance were left aside and the ratings were a 'static measure of the political and institutional environment.'[133] As such, some authors in the document concluded that the CPIA in fact evaluated the political and institutional *tools* of a country, rather than its performance.[134] Moreover, as outcomes are left out of the calculation, so are any factors that can be influenced by external pressures and shocks, such as violence and conflict.[135] These, however, are vital to understand constraints a government faced, the speed and quality of its decisions and the tools it was able to employ, which together can tell much about the performance of a country.

In fact, at that point the Bank had not treated 'fragile states' as 'if having conflict was a separate problem, requiring separate responses', hence, specific knowledge on the issue was yet scarce.[136] Measuring the impact of IDA in 'fragile states' was seen as a difficult process, since there were no agreed upon indicators on peacebuilding and statebuilding to measure security, as there were for measuring progress towards the MDGs. Thus, the Bank committed to work with the OECD to develop 'better indicators of progress' in 'fragile states'.[137]

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[132] Bull, Morten Jerve et al. Nov 2006, p. 5.
[133] Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Dec 2005, p. 18: 'mesure statique de l'environnement politique et institutionnel'.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Interview with Sarah Cliffe. Operational changes to consider the impact of conflict had been implemented in 2001 with the PCPI, but at the time these were not yet linked to 'state fragility' *per se*.
[137] Ibid., p. 15.

Indeed, the final move towards considering 'fragile states' a differentiated category came only with the parallel importance allocated to developing better statistics and better M&E systems in situations of crisis and conflict.

2.3. STATISTICS FOR 'STATE FRAGILITY': DIAGNOSING TURNAROUND

Around the same time when the above debates were taking place, the Bank, through an IDA14 dedicated to the MDGs, presented three main goals, among them, to strengthen the poverty reduction character of PRSPs, respecting ownership and national priorities, and to focus on measuring results and investing in national statistical capacity. The report identified that 50 percent of CAS documents reported a lack of statistical capacity in recipient governments, and this was seen a crucial gap to cover in order to achieve the MDGs and, thus, to reduce poverty. An IDA Results Monitoring System (RMS) was proposed to track the progress towards the MDGs and the PRSPs' goals. The reasoning was all-encompassing:

> The paradigm of development effectiveness holds that good policies based on empirical evidence and a clear understanding of the development process will lead to improved outcomes, by directing scarce resources to their most effective use and ensuring that benefits flow to those in need. A corollary is that rigorous monitoring of programs and evaluation of results will lead to a better understanding of the development process, better policies, and further improvements in outcomes. This feedback loop, from results to policies to programs, lies at the core of the results agenda. Statistics are the information carriers that make the process work.[138]

Statistics were being proposed as vehicles of accumulated knowledge that would tell equally about past, present and future.

Crucially, however, this move towards improving M&E systems and the production of data related to 'state fragility', although contributing to establishing the Bank's approach to 'fragile states' in more definite terms, did not reduce the focus on performance. A 2009 evaluation conducted by IEG had 'confirmed the usefulness of the CPIA as a broad indicator of development effectiveness', according to the IDA16 document (2011), thus, there was support to maintain the Bank's focus on performance and governance.

[138] International Development Association (IDA) November 2004, p. 2.

The focus on performance, in fact, can be considered stronger still in IDA17 (2013), and it has encouraged ever more investments in statistical analyses to understand how to facilitate better performance and avoid pitfalls. Moreover, as the concerns increased with understanding environments of conflict and its impacts over development, these statistical analyses moved to try to capture the precise conditions in which assistance could achieve optimum results, making assistance a priority when these conditions are already in place. For instance, PCPI countries whose rates stagnate or decline may not be eligible for further exceptional allocation, which shows that although the 'fragile states' agenda drew the Bank somewhat to the security realm, conflict situations are far from being a priority. At the end of the day, conflict and violence determine portfolio performance ratings and can reduce or even forbid allocation. The core of the approach still depends on the '*potential for a well-defined role*' for the Bank, that is, results and measurable progress that can be attributed to the Bank and satisfy its stakeholders – an accountability absolutely all interviewees acknowledged and to which hardly any applied an apologetic tone of any sort.[139]

'We are, after all, a Bank.'[140]

The result of these moves, intrinsically connected to the advance of the Management for Development Results agenda, was the creation of a somewhat sub-category of 'fragile states', one with access to exceptional allocations attributed through the PCPI: Along with post-conflict and re-engagement countries, the IDA17 proposes the category of *'turnaround' states*, an addition supposed to increase the orientation of IDA towards poverty reduction, by making optimum use of situations of change.[141] Very tellingly of a perhaps incipient turn towards yet another (sub-)nomenclature, the document advances the sub-category of 'turnaround states' as a possibility to 'mitigate [the 3.2] threshold effects' associated with the definition of 'fragile states'.[142] It seems the Bank is turning even more clearly towards opportunities to achieve a better risk-results ratio; after all,

[139] Ibid., p. 22.
[140] Interview with Gary Milante.
[141] International Development Association (IDA) March 2013, p. ii.
[142] Ibid., p. 20.

'turn around' countries, by definition, are *already* in the process of turning around. The IDA17 justifies the new sub-category for the possibility to 'modulat[e] the level of assistance along the fragility continuum.' It goes on: 'In doing so, the adjustment would enhance IDA's capacity to provide timely and adequate support to help countries seize the opportunities presented at critical junctures on their path out of fragility.'[143] Further ranking, it seems, would allow improved aid effectiveness – a fundamental rationale that has not changed but, instead, intensified.

Compatible with this urge to grasp the better moment for intervention, among the other goals of the IDA 17 was the creation of more responsive and agile operational policies to deal with 'fragile states' and the building of a 'community of practice' to be available across the Bank's regions, supposed to be centred in the CCSD, as previously mentioned.

2.4. ORGANISATIONAL RE-STRUCTURING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH 'FRAGILE STATES'

Regarding themes, since the IDA17, the Bank is said to be 'refocusing' on 'citizen security', justice and jobs, and the IDA17 mentions the contributions of the g7+ and the *New Deal* to forward a 'new paradigm' of development aid.[144] Furthermore, after a decade of rapprochement, the document has many points to count as perceived positive contributions towards the 'fragile states' agenda. The portfolio performance in IDA 'fragile states' is supposed to have paired with non-'fragile states', seen as an achievement of operational and structural changes.[145] In order to improve effectiveness even further, the Bank commits to support g7+ countries that have already completed their Fragility Assessment by including these measurements in their CAS and Interim Strategy Notes (ISN), which are designed as temporary project plans in situations of emergency, before CAS can be produced.

In addition, the IDA17 document mentions new incentives for qualified staff to work in 'fragile states', but the document also proposes to increase efforts to hire local staff and, interestingly, it affirms the Bank

[143] Ibid., p. 19.
[144] Ibid., p. 3.
[145] Ibid., p. 5.

created an indicator to measure 'face time' and monitor direct professional support to 'fragile states'.[146] These can be perceived as modifications implemented to respond to frequent criticisms towards the lack of country ownership and investment in capacity building in 'fragile states' in the context of the World Bank's projects.[147]

2.5. NOT ENOUGH CHANGES: THE PROBLEMS OF RANKING

Looking at the CPIA ratings and the IDA exercise in general, critical remarks I already made regarded mainly the side-lining of security concerns, the doubtful approach towards increased ownership, and the proposed sub-categorisation of 'fragile states', which can lead to even more unquestioned focus on countries that offer more opportunity for change rather than those that present more needs. It is yet too soon to analyse the impacts of the changes proposed and implemented; however, some of the points raised by critics are still pertinent, as they were not addressed – or are likely to be – by the last replenishment exercises. Among these, there is the relevant critique towards aggregation in general: One substantial and, in the case of indices such as the CPIA, rather political point is the fact that multi-dimensional rankings that rely on aggregation of its several criteria have to develop one unit of measure to make all indicators commensurate,[148] which can be extremely problematic when dealing with human, social and political elements such as 'gender equality' and 'quality of public administration'.[149] Rather like currency, the CPIA ratings allow one to know how much of 'gender equality' equals 'x' of 'macroeconomic management'.[150] Indeed, aggregation in multi-dimensional rankings tends to compensate non-substitutable variables, so that if 'gender equity' is not well rated, 'macroeconomic management' might compensate for it in the final average, when, in fact, they are obviously not to be substituted. In addition, as Grävingholt, Ziaja and Kreibaum point out, even more

[146] Ibid., p. 12, footnote 19.
[147] Although the face time indicator, for example, easily begs questions as to what method will be used for measurement.
[148] See Espeland and Stevens 1998.
[149] Gutiérrez Sanín, Buitrago et al. 2011. See Annex 2.
[150] See clusters in Annex 2.

problematic is the fact that these commensurate measures will be aggregated and visually simplified:

> ….the main issue with these indexes is not so much the ever-difficult challenge of measurement but rather their common conceptual assumption that a multi-dimensional concept such as statehood can be aggregated and projected onto a uni-dimensional scale without a massive loss – and even distortion – of information.[151]

In a similar study, Gutiérrez Sanín, Buitrago and González conclude simply: 'Since there are no substitution rates, multidimensionality cannot be disposed of,'[152] that is, it should not be presented in any other way.

Finding yet another significant problem with aggregation, the authors suggest that *ad hoc* functional formulae have an underlining 'what-you-want-is-what-you-get' rationale. If the researchers can decide on the aggregation formula to be applied to the set of variables already available, they can apply such a formula that will provide the kind of results already expected, in fact, 'a big family of mutually contradictory – and otherwise perfectly reasonable – regression results.'[153] Studies having the ranking as dependent variable would be hardly sound – perhaps even including the World Bank's old and battered correlation between governance and performance.

Seeing that IDA replenishments are exactly periodic adaptations to the aggregation formulae, the issues above raise important questions. Nevertheless, the Bank has never made less than explicit its purpose to focus on cases that *can* generate more results for its portfolio; thus, *ad hoc* formulae might be a perfectly acceptable practice. The problem appears when a ranking that was created to allocate resources becomes a definitional matrix, even more in the case of 'fragile states', whose offices often cannot counter either numbers or financial categories and heavily depend on resources allocations. As quantification and classification flourished, therefore, their length of exposure was all along accompanied by the multiplication of alternative moves.

[151] Grävingholt, Ziaja et al. 2012, pp. 3, 11-14.
[152] Gutiérrez Sanín, Buitrago et al. 2011, p. 7.
[153] Ibid., p. 3.

This is the context in which the g7+ was founded, in between the World Bank's attempts at further detailing the classification of 'fragile states', improving the investment-results ratio by investing in situations that already indicate positive turnaround, while also keeping an alleged concern with country ownership, and by slowly moving towards ever greater investments in quantification and M&E systems. Although *one* example of *one* form of quantification and classification, the CPIA exercise is a rich case of a history of critique towards these practices and how such practices have adapted over time. These are all crucial elements to understand how it was possible for the g7+ to be born and what luggage the group brought to the negotiation room.

In the following section, thus, I analyse how the debates such as those around the CPIA ranking can be seen to have culminated in the foundation of the g7+, with its specific agenda and positioning regarding both the 'fragile state' label and its quantification.

3. TIMOR-LESTE AND THE G7+: SELF-LABELLING AND SELF- MEASUREMENT

This section briefly discusses the trajectory of Timor-Leste in the last 15 years and its co-foundation and chairing of the g7+ group in 2010. It also looks at the g7+'s projects, tools and practices and places the group in the context of the international dialogue on development aid just discussed. So far, the aim of the chapter was to delineate the dialogue in such a way as to highlight what roles and reasoning were formed and how they were practiced, in order to also indirectly suggest what possibilities there were for participation in this dialogue. In this section, I look at how these possibilities were explored by the g7+, having as important background the Timorese experience with donors and with the development agenda, and how these culminated in the Timorese government's leading the creation of the g7+.

All analysts and policy-makers seem to agree that Timor-Leste was a diplomatic success story. In 1999, its leaders in the country – Xanana Gusmão and Bishop Belo – and mainly those in exile – among them, Nobel Peace Prize winner José Ramos Horta –[154] achieved notoriety for the persistence and articulated advocacy for the country's independence from Indonesia, which had annexed Timor-Leste in 1976, just as the country became independent of its former colonial power, Portugal. Occupying half an island, in the middle of the Indian Ocean and with no great economic potential then explored, Timor-Leste could easily have passed unnoticed by the international agencies in its fight to separate from Indonesia. However, its leaders effectively created international commotion for the cause, and Portugal heavily supported the agenda among donors, pushing the debate in the UN, along with other leaders. Moreover, the cause also gained strong support from the World Bank's president, James Wolfenson, and the IMF president, Michel Camdessus.[155] In August 1999, it finally culminated in a referendum conducted by the UN, the result of which was the much sought independence of Timor-Leste, announced on 4 September 1999.

The success of the cause is attributed to many factors.[156] One of the most important, according to some analysts, was that the international community saw Timor-Leste as a possibility of success, hence, a good case in which to intervene and, then, reap the positive results. At the same time, because there was this possibility, there was also the *expectation* of achieving success, at whatever costs.[157]

However, the role of the national leaders should not be downplayed, and many donor agencies' representatives still refer to their achievements as commendable:

[154] Most of the leaders of the fight for independence were at some point prime-minister or president, with many eventually having occupied both positions.
[155] Martin 2001, pp. 107-8.
[156] See Martin 2001, ch. 8; Conflict Security and Development Group (CSDG) 2003, Introduction.
[157] Interviews with Nuno Mota Pinto and Anonymous 1.

> Timorese resistance slowly created a successful international lobby. If you don't exist in the US media, you don't exist. They got to the US. They were well known for a while in foreign affairs.[158]

Facing this efficient advocacy, the expectations of donors when delegations finally set foot in Timor-Leste were immense:

> Donors were eager to show… 'this time we will get it right'. I actually heard someone say 'this country will go straight from third world to first world'.[159]

The UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was established to allow for a smooth transition between the referendum, which decided for independence, and the coming elections. Indonesia, however, had not left in peace: Militias had destroyed around 70 percent of the Timorese infra-structure and left 75 percent of the population displaced.[160] The threat of such violence was well known among the population, yet of those who had registered for the voting, 98 percent went to the polling centres and many waited hours for the opportunity to vote.[161] It is said that by 6.30am, around 50 percent of the population had already voted.[162] In the context of such local response, one can imagine donors' expectations were probably further increased.

Not surprisingly, thus, the mission established after the elections, UNTAET, is much seen as an 'overdoing' of the involvement donors had practiced since before the referendum. The transitional authority is said to have systematically overridden national representatives, and the period is seen by many, including former UN officers, as one of authoritarian execution of the UN mandate and alarming lacking of ownership and participation of the Timorese people. A former head of district administration for UNTAET, Jarat Chopra, highlights the uniqueness of the mission, as it attempted to build Timor-Leste 'through UN statehood': 'This project assumed a state-centric *terra nullius* open season on institutional invention. East Timor was not, however, a political non-man's-land.'[163] Not indeed, if it was the much praised national leadership the one capable to

[158] Interview with Nuno Mota Pinto.
[159] Interview with Anonymous 1, speaking about a situation before his/her own placement in Timor-Leste.
[160] World Bank 1999.
[161] Conflict Security and Development Group (CSDG) 2003, p. 222.
[162] Martin 2001, p. 90.
[163] Chopra 2002, p. 981.

effectively 'put Timor on the map'. Chopra's heavy-worded article speaks of UN 'absolutism', 'malevolence' and 'intoxication' with power.[164] The 'sovereignty' of the UN mission was such that when the World Bank became the trustee of the international Trust Fund for East Timor (TFET), the authority signing the contracts was Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the Brazilian chief of mission, who embodied both Executive and Legislative powers. Chopra points to several instances when the mission led efforts to somehow deter increasing ownership.[165] An account of this period and of the wave of donors arriving immediately after that by the now secretary-general for the g7+, Helder da Costa, eloquently illustrates what the Timorese leadership felt at the time:

> In 1999, when the United Nations began its transitional administration, our education on global integration and the relevance of coordination between diplomacy, development and defence were in their infancy. When sovereignty was restored in 2002, the influx of aid, donors and NGOs, national and international, was in full swing as they established their compounds, procedures, plans, agendas and staff; and with them came a vast array of observances and theoretical approaches to the development of our country. The international organisations employed the brightest Timorese and trained them in foreign systems that were neither complementary nor prepared them for entry into government, leaving the government of the day with little capacity to fortify an impenetrable bureaucracy in the first sovereign state of the new millennium.[166]

In that context, the role of the World Bank is praised, first for its early engagement – the Bank had been preparing for reconstruction since the beginning of 1999 – and for its early concern with local ownership, through its Community Empowerment Project (CEP), which helped build local councils that were supposed to democratically decide on priorities and how to implement them. The UN is said to have been radically against the project, and some say it was seen as going against its own plan to focus on *state*-building.[167]

> Our approach put us in a natural conflict with the UN. I am not saying any of them is right, they have benefits. But the Timorese were caught a bit in between. The UN did a fantastic job with the violence at the time. They were trying to build a state. They brought 10,000 people to a country of 800,000 of which 100,000 had left. So they were a significative part. There were traffic jams of white jeeps! We [from the World Bank] rode bikes. We were working with the locals and they

[164] Ibid.
[165] Chopra 2002.
[166] Costa 2012, pp. 96-7.
[167] Interview with Malcolm Ehrenpreis. See also Chopra 2002, p. 993.

> [the UN] were a lot in the compound. They had occupied the Presidential Palace. We were in a simple house.[168]

I can perhaps safely suppose this image would not correspond to no one's idea of a World Bank delegation in a 'fragile state'. However, reports and stories do seem to converge, and even among former UN members and external analysts, the World Bank was complimented by the early and close engagement.[169] I would venture to say much might have been related to the chief of the Bank's mission in the country, Sarah Cliffe, who had previously worked for the ANC in South Africa and had since created a reputation for focusing on security concerns and civil society.[170]

At the time, as seen in the previous sections, the Bank was refining its approach to conflict and its relation with development and was exploring approaches to deal with this connection. Many of the key substantial, structural and operational changes in the Bank happened in the early 2000s, and it seems Timor-Leste was not only an experiment for the UN, but also for the World Bank, a chance to test the limits of its engagement with 'fragile states'. Sarah Cliffe would become the director of the Fragile and Conflict-Affected States Group, the first internal sector created in the Bank to deal with 'fragile states'. She is said to have also become close to the then future Minister Emília Pires, while working in Timor.[171] At the beginning indeed, Emília Pires worked as part of the national transitional group, but was paid directly by the World Bank.[172]

After much opposition from the UN, however, the CEP was not concluded with success, although the effort drew attention amid the perceived authoritarianism of the UN mission.[173] Nonetheless, some came to see the CEP as also lacking in local ownership at the level of decision-making, and analysts point at this as a general tendency of the World Bank's practices as trustee of the TFET.[174]

After 2002 and the end of the UNTAET, the country was thought to be on the right path to development. At the very end of the mission, many

[168] Ibid.
[169] Interview with Ian Martin.
[170] See Cliffe Aug 2003, Foreword.
[171] Interview with Vanessa Wyeth.
[172] Interview with Emilia Pires.
[173] Interview with Ian Martin. See also Cliffe and Rohland Nov 2002.
[174] Davis 2010.

spoke of its relative success, although this opinion changed considerably in the following years.[175] However, a violent crisis in 2006 forced the government to call for troops from Portugal, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand, for which Timorese representatives are said to have been deeply 'ashamed'.[176] The call was just over a year after the last peacekeepers had left the country, and the civil unrest left 15 percent of the population displaced again.[177] The causes are complex, multiple and beyond the scope of this analysis. It is however interesting to notice that the government was struggling with *medium-term expenditure* planning while external technical assistance was apparently focused on 'core functions of the state' and less so on *budget execution* and service delivery. This was seen as complicated still by the lack of technical capacity in the ministries, a huge problem in the country at the time and one highlighted in various reports. The IEG review of the World Bank's work in Timor-Leste from 2000 to 2010 evaluates many results as unsatisfactory, among them those related to *capacity building and youth unemployment and dissatisfaction*.[178] Moreover, it points to the slow approval of key projects due to bureaucratic procedures, even after the Bank had adapted some of the procedures for conflict and reconstruction situations. In addition, it is said that when finally approved, many projects were too complex in design for appropriate implementation (see figures 3 and 4 below).[179] Considering that the 2006 crisis is seen as very much linked to a *high level of unemployment among youth* in the capital and to the government's *lack of capacity to deliver long-expected public goods*, the specific gaps just listed were immensely problematic.

[175] Lemay-Hebert 2011, 2012.
[176] Interview with Ian Martin.
[177] Porter and Rab 2 November 2010, p. 1.
[178] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011
[179] Ibid., pp. 22-3, footnote 37.

Simplicity in Projects, 2000-10.
Percent of All Closed Projects Noted for Simplicity or Complexity of Design by IEG Assessments

Year of Approval	*% of Projects noted for complexity of design*	*% of Projects noted for simplicity of design*
FY00-02	62	38
FY03-05	57	43
FY06-07	100	0
FY08-10	NA	NA
TOTAL PERIOD	**62**	**38**

*Source: *Based on IEG's ICR reviews and PPARs. This table only includes those projects where IEG's project reviews commented on complexity or simplicity of design, and the total numbers are therefore modest.*

FIGURE 5: WORLD BANK'S PROJECTS IN TIMOR-LESTE[180]

Timor-Leste: Speed of Project Preparation and Implementation:
Time Interval (in months)

	Between Appraisal and Approval	*Between Approval and Effectiveness*	*Gap between planned closing date and actual*
FY00-02	2.8	3.1	21.4
FY03-05	3.1	3.3	7.1
FY06-07	2.8	3.3	5.3
FY08-10	3	5.7	Na
FY00-10	**3.1**	**3.4**	**13.4**
Edu. Projects	2.3	3.4	17.7
Health Projects	2.3	3.2	36.7
Agr, Projects	2.6	2.3	11

Source: ICRs and ICR Reviews

FIGURE 6: WORLD BANK'S IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS IN TIMOR-LESTE[181]

3.2. THE PATH TO THE G7+: DISSATISFACTION AND OWNERSHIP

Perhaps not surprisingly, after the civil unrest had ended, in 2007, the government decided to take initiative against the Bank's advice and it increased spending using petroleum resources. By this time and almost simultaneously, the Bank had disclosed its CPIA ratings, and Timor-Leste's first rating was 2.7, among the ten worst ratings in the list of 77 IDA countries; it could be duly labelled, therefore, as a 'fragile state' and could also be included in the PCPI list.[182]

There are still several challenges in Timor-Leste, but after 2007, the new government managed to take the country on a three-year-consecutive rate of 9 percent growth, in part related to the new security situation but also to the increasing public spending, decided *against* World Bank's advice.[183]

> The role and influence of donors, including the WBG, has declined since 2007. Though the country still requires substantial international technical support, increased hydrocarbon revenues make it less dependent on

[180] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011, p. 24.
[181] Ibid., p. 25.
[182] It excluded Liberia, Myanmar and Somalia, which had not been rated in 2006. See World Bank 2006a.
[183] Ibid., p. 3.

> foreign financial assistance. The Government of Timor-Leste shows growing frustration with what is seen as complex, heavy donor mechanisms that at times are perceived as delivering modest tangible benefits relative to investment and effort. It also appears more skeptical about the advice received from the WBG (and other donors).[184]

In May 2007, the Bank began new operations under OP8.00, discussed in the first section and responsible for increasing the speed of decision-making and implementation regarding operations in 'fragile states'.[185] However, the IEG report states that by that time, '[n]ot enough attention was paid to getting accurate and reliable data to monitor progress in critical areas.'[186] Another key criticism of the report was the Bank's approach to advice and training: The Bank is said to have focused on individuals rather than investing in institution-building that would be sustainable; there was a lack of follow-up training for those yet with poor skills in their area; much of the training and software provided were in other languages (mostly English, but also Portuguese, not spoken by many), making absorption difficult; and problems with literacy and numeracy were not properly and systematically addressed, among other issues reported. The review pointed crucially to a lack of a needs assessment and, most striking, a lack of accountability on the part of those providing the training: there was no survey to hear the opinion of the trained Timorese staff.[187]

The answer by the government came in a letter by Minister Emília Pires, attached to the IEG evaluation. In the document, she praised the assistance and support offered by the Bank and complimented the evaluation report by IEG. Nevertheless, she also pointed to several issues in the relationship with the World Bank. The Minister focused mainly on key technical issues and complained of the lack of cross-sectoral analyses, which, she argues, would be the one area where the Bank could provide crucial assistance:

> For international actors to expect a 'fragile nation' to undergo this process…when they themselves had not adequately addressed this challenge…over a decade with 26 donors to share the assignment; it is fair to say, international actors did not provide either a fair or reasonable best

[184] Ibid., p. 6.
[185] World Bank March 2007.
[186] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011, p. 32.
[187] Ibid., Appendix 4.

practice example for strategic planning or implementation for the Government.[188]

The letter also presented strong complaints against the bureaucracy of the Bank, which was said to put 'unreasonable restrictions' to urgent requests by the government: 'Often direct requests from leadership for simple but integral interventions are ignored or labelled "not within a program brief"…This causes frustration.'[189] In that context, the Minister defended the implementation of 'country-led strategies within country-led systems that are navigable'.[190] She also criticised the IEG report for displaying 'a lack of detailed data or qualified analysis to contribute to some conclusions' – 'like all documents produced by international actors', she concludes.[191]

If this dissatisfaction over donors' practices in the country had been felt in the Timorese government for so long, the 2008 Accra speech offered by the Minister Emília Pires was perhaps a reflection of such mood. The speech, mentioned in the first section, is seen as a key move in the path towards the creation of the g7+, with its complaints regarding the overwhelming presence and attitude of donors. In 2009, thus, in a seemingly attempt to analyse the impact of aid and aid agencies in Timor-Leste, the government volunteered to be a pilot country in the *Fragile States Principles Monitoring Survey*, conducted by OECD-INCAF. In fact, the survey was seen as an opportunity to create the knowledge that the government lacked on what exactly was being done by donors in the country. There was a perceived lack of information-sharing and the government had no technical or human resources to keep track of projects.[192] There was also a perception that donors' programmes were not following the government's priorities (this is further discussed in chapter five).[193]

The OECD-INCAF monitoring exercise was to analyse the implementation of the 2007 *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States*, but the report first produced by the Timorese government

[188] Ibid., Attachment 1, p. 192.
[189] Ibid., p. 5.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., p. 3.
[192] Interview with Leigh Mitchell.
[193] Ibid.

was considered somewhat negative in tone towards the donors in terms of what was expected of the survey.[194] It seems the government used the survey to critically analyse the role of donors in the country in a perhaps more rigorous tone than the OECD-INCAF was willing to accept. An officer involved says the draft was negotiated but it ended up being accepted mostly as it was.[195] However, I must say the report looks quite 'balanced' in language for an outsider, acknowledging many contributions by donors and the efforts to state-build Timor-Leste, but also pointing to key problems, mainly in the way capacity was being built and the lack of alignment with national priorities – although the national participants in the survey themselves stated there was still long-term planning to be done by the government for priorities to be made clear and donors to be able to follow them. In terms of capacity building, perhaps the most heavy-worded critique in the report, there were complaints regarding the lack of long-term investment, attention to 'soft' and basic skills first and appropriate transfer of knowledge.[196]

A Timorese Strategic Development Plan was only finally concluded in 2011 covering the period until 2030.[197] The idea put forward was to slowly move towards determining both the country's priorities and how to achieve them.

3.3. THE G7+

So far, I have sought to show how Timor-Leste was and is still seen as a 'special case' by international agencies, due to its peculiar history of efficient international advocacy, the fact that it was the first case of established UN (absolute) sovereignty, and the successful experience in transforming petroleum, Timor-Leste's only true economic good, into an internationally acclaimed special fund.[198] Timor-Leste Petroleum Fund was indeed ranked among the top five by international organisations a few times.[199] Therefore, for a 'fragile state', the country is seen to have more

[194] Ibid
[195] Ibid.
[196] OECD 2010a.
[197] Timor Leste 2011.
[198] Porter and Rab 2 November 2010; Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011.
[199] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011, p. 63, footnote 91.

leeway with international donors than most. These factors were crucial for the country's leadership in founding the g7+.

> They can afford to experiment; they have money to try for themselves.[200]

As seen in the first section, in 2011 Timor-Leste joined DRC and Liberia in organising a closed meeting between ministers from 'fragile states' in parallel to the 4th High Level Meeting on Development Effectiveness, in Busan. With this meeting and the proposition of a *New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States*, the group became officially part of an international dialogue on the agenda. The group was created with the main stated goal of developing a new paradigm for aid intervention, adapting the way in which aid would be 'managed, designed and delivered' in 'fragile states'.[201]

The g7+ immediately started an international lobby through the much active leadership of Minister Emília Pires, the chair, and Helder da Costa, the secretary-general, working from the Secretariat established in Dili. Part of the group's activities is financed by the Timorese government and part comes from donors through OECD-INCAF and the UN Development Program (UNDP), for instance.[202]

The g7+ was born amid donor sponsorship and support and has since engaged in all main donor forums regarding peacebuilding and statebuilding in 'fragile states'. Their ability to infiltrate these dialogues has been commended by all sides (discussed in chapter six).

> They know how the aid game works, they can engage the donors in their level, they speak their language. This is very important. [203]

The *New Deal* aims for development initiatives in 'fragile states' to be country-led, strengthen and respect ownership, invest and use country systems and capacity.[204] Crucially, the group has repeatedly advocated for security indicators to be included among the next round of MDGs. After many years of analyses, data and meetings on the correlation security-

[200] Interview with Leigh Mitchell. Similarly expressed by Nuno Mota Pinto as well.
[201] g7+, 'About'.
[202] There are talks of creating a fee for member states, although nothing in that sense was officially implemented so far. Interview with Felicia Carvalho, New York, 25 Sep 2013. See International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 'About the International Dialogue'.
[203] Interview with Vanessa Wyeth.
[204] g7+ 2010.

development, after all, the MDGs did not include any indicators on security. This is perceived as a frustration by members of the g7+, whose main substantial message is that security has to be the foremost concern in the path to development.[205] For Sarah Cliffe, now working for the UN Civilian Capacity Initiative, and Claire Leigh, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI, UK) officer offering support to the group, the 'novelty' the g7+ brought to the table was indeed its advocacy regarding security, which Cliffe attributes to the trauma caused by the 2006 crisis.[206] There is one thing to be highlighted, however, that the group focuses on security and development *indicators*.

As argued throughout the thesis, the capacity to engage with donors comes much from the adoption of quantification and classification, an indication of the impact of the merge of this reasoning with the 'fragile states agenda' in the possibility of dialogue available and made available for so-called fragile states.

THE NEW DEAL

The core of the g7+'s propositions, the *New Deal,* has three pillars that together speak precisely to the merge this chapter has discussed so far: It proposes that the priority area for donor attention be the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) developed by the group. It also proposes that the new engagement follow a 'progressive methodology', from Fragility Assessment, to 'One Vision, one plan', Compact, Use of the PSGs to monitor, and finally, Support for Political Dialogue (together, the FOCUS). The first is the assessment tool I explore below, the second regards the unity the group purports to represent, the third is the deal donors and 'fragile states' would sign after the assessment is made and following the PSGs, which are then used to monitor the engagement. Finally, the process of self-measurement and monitoring should lead to internal dialogue with diverse stakeholders in 'fragile states'. The third pillar of the *New Deal* involves TRUST, the 'mutual commitments necessary to ensure the viability of the New Deal': Transparency; Risk sharing; Use and

[205] Ibid. This is discussed in details in chapter six.
[206] Interview with Sarah Cliffe.

strengthening of country systems; Strengthening capacity; Timely and predictable aid (see figure 7 below).[207]

The New Deal Components

PSGs	FOCUS	TRUST
Inclusive politics	Fragility assessment	Transparency of aid
Security	One vision, one plan	Risk sharing
Justice	Compact	Use and strengthen country systems
Economic foundation	Use PSGs to monitor	Strengthen capacity
Revenue and services	Support political dialogue	Timely and predictable aid

FIGURE 7: THE NEW DEAL COMPONENTS [208]

Regarding the meeting that anticipated the official foundation of the group, held in Dili, Timor-Leste, in 2010, the secretary-general, Helder da Costa, suggests that 'it emerged clearly…that the central impediments to progress were young institutions, challenged by capacity constraints and maturity, and [the] lack of peace.'[209] Hence, the group's focus on not only peace but also capacity, accountability and ownership, based on the three pillars of the *New Deal*.

As the first step in the 'progressive methodology', the *Fragility Assessment* was the first piloted initiative of the g7+, conducted in 2013 in seven countries, including Timor-Leste itself. The Assessments started with a task force, formed by representatives from ministries, statistics offices, civil society and development agencies. Briefly, the exercise involved determining baseline indicators based on the g7+'s *Fragility Spectrum*, which establishes stages of fragility through self-assessment. The task force was in charge of determining a set of possible common indicators for all members and to test an internal dialogue that would lead to the proposition of country-specific indicators. The outputs include a Fragility Assessment report with a 'filled out Fragility Spectrum that diagnoses where the country is presently situated with respect to each PSG goal', a list of the different indicators, including pre-requisites for collection and monitoring, and a lessons-learned document.[210] The Fragility Spectrum is divided into five stages: crisis, rebuild/reform, transition, transformation,

[207] Costa 2012, p. 99.
[208] Ibid., p. 100.
[209] Ibid., p. 98.
[210] International Dialogue Secretariat 2012, p. 19.

resilience.[211] The position of a country in this spectrum begins to be determined in the internal multi-task force, held in each country conducting the Fragility Assessment. As part of the multi-task force, it is suggested each country organise a workshop where participants answer a set of questions regarding perceived drivers of previous crises, present risks, what the ambitions are for the future of the country, and what the critical areas are to measure progress against the PSGs.[212] A technical group after that is to turn these insights into indicators for each PSG.[213] Descriptive characterisation for each PSG was developed in meetings in Dili, and broad dimensions were formulated in another g7+ meeting in New York.[214]

The process is supported by the Steering Group of the IDPS, composed of a working group and a core group. The first is chaired by DRC and the UN, and the second, composed of representatives from Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, civil society, the g7+ Secretariat and two experts.[215] Together, they are in charge of 'guiding the selection of common/shared indicators and country-level indicators'.[216] The goal is to have simple indicators and avoid overlapping with the MDGs.[217]

The Fragility Spectrum is said to work as a 'diagnostic matrix', with scales from 1 to 5, corresponding to the stages mentioned above. The stated objective is for the 'Fragility Spectrum to become an innovative, self-assessment tool for fragility in a particular country context.'[218] As a pilot country, Timor-Leste has concluded its Fragility Assessment and Spectrum, and the final ratings are shown in the draft report as a table (see figure 8 below).

[211] Timor-Leste Government 26 Feb 2013, p. 5.
[212] International Dialogue Secretariat 2012, p. 21.
[213] Ibid., pp. 22-3.
[214] Ibid., p. 20.
[215] International Dialogue Secretariat 4 December 2012, p. 2. See Annex 5.
[216] Ibid., p. 4.
[217] Ibid. See Annex 6.
[218] Ibid.

PSGs	Fragility Stages				
	Stage 1: Crisis	Stage 2: Rebuild-Reform	Stage 3: Transition	Stage 4: Transforma	Stage 5: Resilience
1. Legitimate Politics			3		
2. Security			3.5		
3. Justice		2			
4. Economic Foundation		2.5			
5. Revenues & Services			3		

FIGURE 8: TIMOR-LESTE'S FRAGILITY SPECTRUM[219]

A detailed table with indicators for each PSG is presented at the end of the draft report.[220] Each PSG was assigned a rating and, thus, a stage in the Fragility Spectrum, with the average presented in the table seen in figure 8 above. The indicators and the exercise itself are so far clearly much simpler than those executed by donor agencies, such as the CPIA, but for now that is the extent the group is planning to go, and for that the g7+ counts with the help of the IDPS and other donors, such as the ODI.[221]

The work of the group so far has been growing in two directions. The g7+'s stated rationale indicates the core objective to have not only security, but *security indicators*.

> Peacebuilding and statebuilding should be recognised as part of the post MDG framework so that the unique needs of fragile and conflict-affected states can be adequately addressed to ensure the cycles of instability stop and nations can start on a firm trajectory to sustained resilience, development and peace.[222]

The two fronts involved are intrinsically associated. One regards the measurement done by outsiders who 'have not lived the same experiences',[223] measurements that, therefore, the group suggests, are not country-specific and would be ineffective to lead the country to development; and another front where the group struggles to have security measured among the post-2015 MDGs (in fact, to be called, it seems, the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs). This is based on the perception among g7+'s representatives that such insertion is the only way in which

[219] Timor-Leste Government 26 Feb 2013, p. 5.
[220] See Annex 6 for examples from the long list of indicators generated after the pilot studies.
[221] More details in chapter five.
[222] g7+, 'Pathways toward Resilience. The journey continues ...', p. 7.
[223] Interview with Emilia Pires.

not only their realities of conflict will be properly addressed, but their lack of success in achieving certain development goals will be relativised by such realities instead of being considered failures or indications of unwillingness.

> That's why we have a problem with indicators… We need to study what the indicators are going to measure. That is why we did the Fragility Spectrum first, so that we can recognise where we are. We don't go by the normal standard indicators because they [donors] have never experienced life like that, they don't know…The donors always want indicators. They don't know how to work without this framework. We say it might not work, we try to explain. This is all a process. We try to understand why they need those things and they try to understand some things we can't do because there are other priorities.[224]

Or at least this is the kind of exchange the group is seeking now. The new set of indicators is supposed to be more country-specific and the country-led exercise aims to build capacity and use country systems:

> Indicators should reinforce statistical capacity in countries undertaking fragility assessments. National statistical offices should lead and co-ordinate the data collection process and should be the primary source of data, where possible. Indicators will be drawn from civil society, academic, private sector and UN/international agencies only when the national statistics offices cannot collect the data.[225]

These messages have been taken to different forums since 2011 with relative success. Most agree there is certainly success achieved in the realm of the development agenda and international debates; it is yet to be seen, however, if the g7+'s propositions will be implemented.[226] A key path to achieve this is to overcome the challenge represented by the post-2015. Minister Emília Pires is part of the High Level Panel that is currently debating what modifications to make to the MDGs and how. The report published in 2013 takes the quantifying and classifying reasoning even beyond what it has involved so far:

> We recommend that any new goals should be accompanied by an independent and rigorous monitoring system…We also call for a *data revolution for sustainable development*, with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to people and governments.[227]

[224] Ibid.
[225] International Dialogue Secretariat 4 December 2012, p. 24.
[226] Interviews with Vanessa Wyeth, Claire Leigh and Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu.
[227] United Nations 2013, p. 21. My emphasis.

Moreover, the 2013 report calls on all countries 'to recognise peace and good governance as a core element of wellbeing, *not an optional extra.*'[228] It is to be seen if this goal will indeed be approved and included in the SDGs; it would be the culmination of the many events, practices and changes in development just discussed. We can add yet to this the 'data revolution' and 'the aim to quantify targets whenever possible' also proposed by the High Level Panel report and part of an already deep-seated reasoning in the 'fragile states' agenda, as this chapter sought to show. The moment, context and rationale of the foundation of the g7+ are, therefore, both a derivation of these debates and a force contributing to steering them, even if its strength is yet to be established, as discussed ahead.

4. CONCLUSIONS: THE G7+'S MOMENTUM

This chapter had a political sociological argument in the form of a historical (and technical) series of events, actors and practices. The purpose was to show how the 'fragile states' agenda merged with a quantifying and classifying reasoning that had slowly become entrenched in the development debate. Part of this entrenchment was due to an increasing perception that it was necessary to understand and measure the correlation between conflict and development to analyse how aid could be made more effective. This tendency to combine analyses of conflict and development, in turn, was made possible by a quantifying and classifying reasoning, but also contributed to create the momentum for a 'culture' of 'development for results'. An ever higher investment in M&E became central to this 'culture' and crucial in the management of 'fragile states'. Furthermore, the notion that development and security were connected (at least on paper) was made measurable and 'monitorable' in the context of 'state fragility' and the many ratings and rankings the agenda invited and fed. In the circularity of these events and practices, the more 'fragile states' are measured, the more an uncontested political reality they become. At the same time, the more pervasive a subject they become in international debates, the more

[228] Ibid., p. 29. My emphasis.

attractive a target for the production of statistical analyses looking to find correlations, probabilities and, thus, the keys to development.

The chapter looked at practices of classification to exemplify the impacts for so-called fragile states, and navigated the main critiques to a specific ranking, the World Bank's CPIA, in order to illustrate how the agenda has adapted to the perceived negative results of the quantifying and classifying reasoning. The problems identified and criticised in the CPIA not only did not eliminate the exercise, but intensified the revisions that keep it alive and well. Revisions, however, lead to changes, even if small ones. Hence, as will be discussed ahead, what empowers the ever openness of this quantifying and classifying reasoning, its widespread use, is also what allows cracks to open.

In this context, the g7+ was founded, much guided by the efforts of Timorese leaders who had experience with a successful international lobby, had worked closely with donors in a unique form of intervention, and had been particularly well placed to also refuse demands of donors due to the country's perhaps privileged position among 'fragile states', as a country with considerable resources. So far, the g7+ seems to obey the pragmatic reasoning discussed in the previous chapter: The group's foundation looks both a natural development for the 'weakest side' in a too powerful agenda and an extremely important effort to contest and lead, one that uses the same language and tools, and precisely for that, has been able so far to reach some levels of the dialogue. The g7+'s approach seems to focus on 'what works' - borrowing Hacking's pragmatic argument. The next chapters explore *how* this reasoning 'works' and what happens when it does.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUANTIFYING AND CLASSIFYING 'STATE FRAGILITY': ADAPTABLE STANDARDS FOR DATA AND THE STATE

The previous chapter discussed the practices advanced to determine what 'state fragility' is and how to tackle it. In this chapter, I analyse what is it that leads to the perception that these practices 'work', in the sense in which Hacking expresses the idea: Practices that quantify and classify 'state fragility' become largely adopted when they are seen as effective in what they propose to do; in turn, they are seen as effective when they have results; and they have results when the standards of development results are fulfilled, as determined by the same agenda, through precisely these quantifying and classifying practices. Hence, the methods determine both the results achieved and what results can be *expected*, as both methods and object are enabled and limited by the same style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. In this context, adaptable standards become the rule rather than signs of failure: Methods and object are not flawed if they cannot be seen as perfect; on the contrary, the fact that they are adaptable reinforces their authority by turning imprecision into 'flexibility'.

In the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', it is acceptable to adapt practices and plans and search for 'fitness of purpose' rather than perfection; this is how ideas of 'good enough' or 'fit-for-purpose' data become 'standards of good reason', just as 'fit-for-purpose institutions' and a tacit expectation of 'good enough governance' become largely proposed and adopted. While many criticise what they see as an imposition of Western standards of statehood, this form of 'niche standardisation' is never explored.[1] I argue this adaptability of standards is central for the authority of the (numerical) practices that classify 'fragile states', thus, for the political existence of the 'fragile state' itself.

In this chapter, I suggest the merge of the quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda has brought practices of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to conform with standards that are understood as adaptable and, most importantly, accepted as such.[2] Practices of M&E have met fierce limitations in 'fragile states' both in method and resultant object: Data can be difficult to collect and analyse and results are harder to achieve, at least in the way results were often comprehended; national statistical offices in so-called fragile states frequently lack staff and/or technologies; slow procedures and traditional norms can impede the development of donor projects; conflict and violence can turn apparently simple targets such as improved school attendance into challenges; the perceived lack of credibility of national leaders and/or the risk of abrupt political changes may discourage usual investments in institutional solidification; difficulty in finding centralised national databases might make it necessary to resort to local NGOs' knowledge whose reliability was not pre-assessed; national ministries might need reports and analyses that are quick to read, use and adapt instead of complete and intricate documents. Facing these difficulties, ideas of 'good enough data', 'fit-for-purpose institutions' and 'good enough governance' came to the fore in the measuring and management of 'fragile states' by donor agencies. These ideas can be said to represent a lowering of expectations and the modification of standards and, as such, they impact practices of

[1] Epstein 2007, 2009. I discuss this notion further ahead.
[2] See glossary in Annex 8..

quantification and classification as much as they affect the idea of 'fragile states' itself.

I argue it is because this reasoning contains in itself the possibility to authenticate imprecision and imperfection that these 'good enough' methods become accepted; and I suggest it is because these methods are, recently, intrinsically related to the management of 'fragile states' that imperfection and imprecision are also accepted in terms of governance and institutional performance. As measurable entities, 'fragile states' can be managed to an acceptable degree; and since degrees invite the fitting of solutions, fit-for-purpose remedies can and should be proposed, or so it is argued. Quantification turns difference into many manageable small parts.

In this chapter, I explore practices of M&E that I suggest are central in the construction of 'fragile states'. I do so by looking at the modified standards of data and 'state' they generate, enable and feed from. The first section of this chapter discusses how the quantifying and classifying reasoning so far explored authenticates imperfection and imprecision. I suggest this adaptable bar originated in a long tradition of statistical reasoning, with its insights and limits regarding what can be known and how much knowledge can be 'effectively' acquired, presumed and inferred. Subsequently, I focus on practices that construct 'fragile states': I discuss the practices of M&E attached to the quantifying and classifying reasoning analysed in the previous chapters and their connection with debates dating back to the nineteenth century. I compare the old achievements made by statistics with the recent changes in the World Bank to adapt to the agenda on 'state fragility'. Following this discussion, the third section analyses changes in procedures in the World Bank and OECD that effectively modify standards for the practices of M&E themselves, in the sense that what needs to be monitored and how it will be evaluated are re-standardised, conforming to the perceived challenges of 'state fragility', which the same practices help to construct. In this context, the fourth section argues that the modification of standards in data production, analysis and in how data will impact policy-making also led to a modification in expectations. It became possible to argue for 'good enough governance' or 'fit-for-purpose' institutions as efficient, tailored and *realistic* solutions. The fifth section then looks at how all these propositions and adjustments were incorporated by

the g7+'s practices, in the group's advocacy for increasing tolerance towards more feasible development results. This analysis is crucial to understanding how the g7+'s practices can be located in the context of the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'.

1. STATISTICS' MANY SUCCESSES: MAKING SCIENCE OUT OF THE UNKNOWN

The previous chapter discussed the merge of a quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda by reflecting on the ways statistics slowly became an essential part of how 'fragile states' are analysed and managed. As the concluding thoughts sought to highlight, the urge to understand the connection between security and development, the growing focus of development debates on aid effectiveness and the expanding interest in quantifying these connections were all intrinsically related. They were also mutually influential in delineating the 'fragile states' agenda, just as this agenda was central in making of these propositions such tantalising bureaucratic practices.

I argue in this section that in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', the statistical reasoning of the quantifying and classifying sort explored in the last chapter, and the old debates of which it is part, are crucial to understand how 'state fragility' and its accompanying remedies are made political realities. Moreover, I suggest these realities are connected by what I would call the metaphysics of *correlation*, one in which connections only need *to hint* at explanation, for which global data can be *inferred* from samples, feeding models with enough '*goodness of fit*' to generate knowledge on *possible* results, the standards of which can be willingly adapted according to what is seen as appropriate for the different categories of polities. I argue that this metaphysics of correlation is one based on the long history of success of statistics in turning *lack of* knowledge into science. The quantifying and classifying reasoning explored so far is capable of justifying actions based on what is not known and, at the same time, advocate a flexible management of expectations. In this section, thus, I briefly look at the long-dated successes of statistical reasoning in order to first make my argument

on the metaphysics of correlation, which is central to understand the practices that classify 'fragile states', discussed in the subsequent sections.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW DOESN'T HURT US?

In the nineteenth century, when the modern conception of probability was being developed, Laplace famously stated that probability was 'in part the result of our knowledge, in part, of our ignorance.'[3] He was contributing to a then intense debate that was slowly but quite surprisingly bringing methods used to approach unknown physics to understand society. Quetelet, 'the powerhouse of the statistical movement',[4] had already 'transformed', in Hacking's view, 'the theory of unknown physical quantities, with a definite probable error, into the theory of measuring ideal or abstract properties of a population.'[5] He made such move through his now much-known use of the 'bell-shaped curve' of normal distribution, itself a combination of observation, assessment of uncertainty and inferences regarding the unknown.[6] His approach is not, by any means, a definitive, original or final statement in the history of probability – indeed, the maths behind the curve already existed; his innovation was in bringing the curve to the social realm and turning the mean into a real quantity exactly in cases where it would not naturally be considered so.[7] I use his approach to the bell-shaped curve of normal distribution to highlight the main issues in the quantifying and classifying reasoning I aim to delineate here. Most importantly, I hope these issues will draw attention to both how old some of these debates are – and thus, how much time they sit comfortably in – and how highly powerful can be the results they help to produce in the specific case of the 'fragile states' agenda.

Three elements gathered in the bell-shaped curve – observation, assessment of uncertainty and inferences – can be seen as the culmination

[3] Ibid., p. 111.
[4] Ibid., p, 105.
[5] Ibid., p. 108. It is important to highlight that, as with this thesis, Hacking does not pinpoint 'original producers' for the ideas he analyses in the history of statistical reasoning; he uses them as pictures of a time and space, and emphasises the importance of the context in which their ideas were able to develop. Indeed, although he presents it as a work of history, and of course, philosophy, I would recognise his history of probability in the nineteenth century as an extremely rich sociological approach, faithful to the relations between actors, their career and location, among other important factors crucial in providing authority to the ideas proposed.
[6] Ibid., p. 106.
[7] Ibid., p. 107. An easy example might be 'the average man has 2.3 children'.

and the beginning of important impacts achieved by statistics in social sciences. They came about as part of a debate between objective and subjective approaches to probability, the opposition between the 'observation of frequency' and the 'reason to belief' views. These debates and elements together led to our modern conceptions of correlation, statistical law and 'goodness of fit' of a model, all made political truths through historical changes in reasoning that slowly opened space for a tamed chance and its 'indeterministic laws'.[8] The combination of observation, assessment of uncertainty and inferences was a form of saving 'chance' without losing control of it. Certainty of a synthetic kind was combined with numerically assessed uncertainties, and thus, even chance could be controlled.

The very possibility that *indeterministic laws* can be seen not as a paradox but as existent and autonomous, in the sense that they, by themselves, help explain social phenomena, is part of the many successes Hacking identifies in statistical history. Indeterministic laws sum up what I see as the deep-seated debates regarding what is reasonable to expect to know and what is acceptable to do with the unknown. In fact, in the nineteenth century statisticians succeeded in turning lack of knowledge into science precisely by quantifying the unknown. Numerically, the unknown was one more element in the construction of new laws about the society; far from being relegated to the realm of religion, mysticism or simply uninformed guess, the unknown was also measured and, thus, objective. It became acceptable not to know *and* reasonable to make decisions that, based on the unknown, cannot guarantee certainty. Not coincidentally, one of the paths that led to the bell-shaped curve employed the 'law of errors' – the curve itself being called 'curve of errors' by some. Statisticians became convinced that errors could tell of important things,[9] and as the errors in measurement pointed to blanks, to the unknown, these were seen as insightful contributions, useful to establish the parameters of method and object. The method was not 'wrong' because it had led to errors; indeed, it was more scientific because it could lead to a realisation of such kind. The

[8] Ibid., p. 149.
[9] Ibid., p. 111.

method ‘worked’ because it would identify the errors born of its own practices.

In the history of this statistical reasoning as presented by Hacking and Desrosières, I highlight the ideas of correlation, statistical law and ‘goodness of fit’, all directly connected to the bell-shaped curve of normal distribution. I suggest the last two are part of the *metaphysics of correlation* to which I referred at the beginning of this section, and I also suggest this metaphysics is crucial in understanding why it became acceptable to affirm what ‘fragile states’ are and how better to manage them, even when dead-ends in practices are so well known and criticised. To understand this point, it is important to analyse how each of the three factors contributed to make science out of the unknown.

In both Hacking’s and Desrosières’s accounts of the development of statistical reasoning in the nineteenth century, the vigorous attempt to quantify walks side by side with the creation and establishment of new technologies of data collection and analysis. It is the ‘avalanche of numbers’[10] produced during and after the Napoleon era that contributed to bring to the fore philosophical debates regarding the *whole* of society, and it was the polemics regarding the role of chance and reason that helped to encourage the production of new methods of data compilation. This mutual influence is a story of many unintended events and, as Hacking puts it, involved as much thinking as doing. Practices were constantly shaping the thinking and vice-versa, through the creation of new experiments and accompanying statistical laws.[11] The bell-shaped curve, where my own story begins, was both a new experiment and a new statistical law; it also became a new political truth.

THE METAPHYSICS OF CORRELATION AND THE ROLE OF ERRORS

The history that starts with the bell-shaped curve and finishes with the ‘good enough governance’ in ‘fragile states’ is, I suggest, one filled with attempts to reconcile the urge to know, grown out of and with an ever-

[10] Recurrent expression in Hacking 1990.
[11] Ibid., p. 206.

expanding mass of numbers, with the increasing (and inevitably related) realisation that much remains unknown.

What Hacking calls the second revolution – following the industrial revolution – is said to have been guided both by generalisers who sought laws to explain the society and by positivists who held 'a vast enthusiasm for measurement for its own sake', but the later would have held a special position in the coming of this second revolution.[12] In the 'measurement for its own sake' rationale, the idea was that the more numbers were collected, the more regularities would appear and, thus, more statistical laws. After all, laws were 'any equations with some numbers in them', numbers made constant by the very reality created by the equation itself:[13] 'In mundane matters, relatively few things are constant, except what we make constant.'[14] The question then was how reasonably to make science and decisions based on what was synthetically imposed.[15]

According to Hacking, around the end of the 1820s, there was a clear division between what some called 'moral *science*', focused on objective 'knowledge', and 'moral *analysis*', serving purposes of decision-making. This was in fact a separation between fact and value.[16] Quetelet's experiment with the bell-shaped curve was largely responsible for bridging this divide. The normal distribution was a law concerned with the average; the curve has a mean and a measure of dispersion, and measurements cluster around the mean if the average is reliable.[17] It was the product of a years-long obsession with numerical regularities and the attempt to derive laws from such events. Moreover, it was a leap from the individual to the general, through the generation of equivalences and practices of encoding. 'How to derive a whole [society] from units [individuals]?' was a question whose answer depended on finding a commonality in individual traits that could be summed up as the traits of society, hence, as average traits.[18] This commonality was also in a common cause, or rather, a set of independent minute causes that preserved both the general and the

[12] Hacking 1990, p. 62.
[13] Ibid., p. 63.
[14] Ibid., p. 56.
[15] See also Hacking 2002 for discussion on mathematics, historical *a priori* and Kant's synthetic *a priori* truth.
[16] Ibid., p. 78.
[17] Ibid., p. 106.
[18] Desrosières 1998, pp. 72, 74, 75.

individual:[19] 'Free acts are minuscule causes that cancel out and allow of the larger regularities. Conversely, those larger regularities do not preclude individual free will.'[20] According to Hacking, Quetelet believed in the perfectibility of men.[21] His normal distribution regarded *people* as a measurable object: 'Where before one thought of a people in terms of its culture or its geography or its language or its rulers or its religion, Quetelet introduced a new objective measurable conception of a people.'[22] It was the first step to manage the 'average individual', through social policies that would 'preserve or alter' qualities of a people.[23] The 'average man' had many critics, but still, it 'stuck'.[24] It would later serve as the basis for eugenics.

Discussing Quetelet's average man, Desrosières raised the question 'how can collective objects – aggregates of individuals – be made to hold?' His answer, I suggest, is another brick in the pragmatic building, and one which perfectly mirrors Hacking's idea of self-authenticating style of thinking & doing.

> [T]he conventions of aggregation, whose various justifications and supports depend on circumstance, find their meaning within the framework of the practices they account for. When the actors can rely on objects thus constructed, and these objects resist the tests intended to destroy them, aggregates do exist – at least during the period and in the domain in which these practices and tests succeed.[25]

The modified but still present versions of Quetelet's average man owe much to the reasoning that brought this to bear in the nineteenth century, which is still present in social science and policy-making.[26] The

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[19] Ibid., p. 78.
[20] Hacking 1990, p. 123. For this step, statistical reasoning heavily relied on Poisson's 'law of large numbers', which, according to Hacking, had become a metaphysical and synthetic *a priori* truth, one whose experimental demonstration was largely ignored in favour of the practicality and potential use of the *law*. It established that 'one could expect statistical stability when considering a sequence of events'. It had been thought as an *a priori* and *a posteriori* truth, both based on experiment and mathematical law, but it became known for the latter only. In my chosen limits for the story in this chapter, I decided not to analyse it in depth. For a discussion, see Hacking 1990, ch. 12, mainly p. 104.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p. 107.
[23] Ibid., p.108.
[24] Ibid., p. 107.
[25] Desrosières 1998, p. 101.
[26] Hacking links this reasoning to a liberal style of government: 'The *we* who knows best change the statistical laws that affect *them.*' He acknowledges the contributions of statistics throughout the centuries in improving living conditions, but he also points to the creation of 'the infra-structure of one of the kinds of power by which our society operates', one that invites surveillance of deviations (see p. 119). This of course is a crucial point when

'framework of practices' in which an idea of 'normal' was born was the framework of medicine, where pathological was a variation in normality, thus, a matter of degree. However, when Comte, in its progressionist approach, transported this notion of normal to politics, it was imbued with a new meaning; it was not ordinary anymore, but a purified state to which everyone should strive: 'Progress and the normal state became inextricably linked.'[27] Quetelet had made artificial mathematical quantities into real quantities, had attributed this to 'a people', had still being able to save 'free will'. Comte went a step further, making a positivist (in his sense of it) use of the curve of normal distribution. With Comte and the introduction of the bell-shaped curve in politics, Hacking suggests there was a new layer of 'hidden power' beyond the fact/value divide: A new and lasting tension was created in the idea of normal – normal as average or as a 'figure of perfection'.[28]

As the story illustrated so far, this tension was produced along years of debate on how to accommodate fact and value, deterministic causes, numerical regularities and free will. It culminated in the transplant of 'normal' to politics in the form of debates on social progress and the perfectibility of 'men'. It is important now also to discuss how these ideas were accompanied by the development of techniques and practices to understand how social traits and political results could be managed and coordinated. If the 'normal' was something everyone should strive to achieve and if society, existing as a whole, could be perfected to achieve certain expected results, it was necessary to develop the mechanisms to manage this perfectibility; therefore, understanding how variables connected was crucial. As statistical laws became used to explain and predict, they took a further step into autonomy,[29] but they were still attached to a 'constraint of having to integrate "external causes" – that is, differently constructed facts.'[30] The positivist answer to what was perceived as the

discussing the power of statistics, but just as in Hacking's own approach, I decide to focus on how the 'infra-structure' was/is built and how the power in it works.

[27] Hacking 1990, p. 168.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., pp. 182, 187, 188.

[30] Desrosières 1998, p. 132.

'metaphysics of causality'[31] was to develop and advance the conception of *correlation*.

The 'mythology' or 'fiction' of causality[32] was slowly substituted by the idea of correlation, which was made 'as real as causes': 'Henceforward the philosophical view of the universe was to be that of a correlated system of variates, approaching but by no means reaching perfect correlation, i.e. absolute causality.'[33] This followed certain understandings that 'everything in the universe occurs but once'.[34] Nevertheless, the impossibility to know all cases by studying one was to be seen not as a failure in producing knowledge, but as a new avenue of investigation for statistics. Correlation indicated how variables related, and the accompanying technique of regression would analyse what that relationship was.[35] The question became: 'Can we find a regular relationship that fits well with the data we have?'[36] Regression was then an attempt to model this relationship through a linear model, which would ideally reduce errors, that is, the distance of the measurement from the line.[37] The model would be measured by '*goodness of fit*', achieved through the calculation of the *coefficient of determination*: It was, in practice, the measurement of the proportion of a variable that could be related to the other one; it was a meagre (measured) contribution to 'explanation', not more, not less. The very notion of coefficient was the admission of *degrees of certainty* as scientific enough.

Correlation was not perfect causality, but it nonetheless became a new political truth, made visible and real by statistical laws and techniques. 'Correlation and regression enabled previously separate objects to hold together. They constructed a new type of spaces of equivalence and compatibility.'[38] Indeed, even a high correlation did not imply causation, so in fact correlation merely indicated that certain things happened simultaneously. All the rest was unknown. However, this 'unknown' was modelled, the errors were measured and acknowledged, and since the

[31] Hacking 1990, p. 188.
[32] Ibid., pp. 71 and 147.
[33] Pearson 1930.
[34] Desrosières 1998, p. 228.
[35] See Annex 3.
[36] From the course 'Introduction to Statistics', administered by Derek Cooper, King's College London. Jan 2013.
[37] See Annex 3.
[38] Desrosières 1998, p. 283.

expectation of identifying causality was long gone, correlation generated autonomy, it helped to tame chance.

> Just as the reality of things could be invoked to solely pragmatic ends, and on condition that the routines of perception be maintained, in the same way 'causation' could only be invoked as an admitted and therefore predictable correlation of likely probability.[39]

As a 'likely probability', correlation was measured in the amount of information it could potentially offer; what I call *metaphysics of correlation* was not a promise of knowledge, but on the opposite, an authoritative 'scientific' acknowledgment of ignorance. And so it remains.

2. FILLING 'STATE FRAGILITY' WITH SCIENCE: WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The 'scientific objectivity' of the unknown became a triumph of statistics, its epistemological rite of passage to autonomy. Its transplant into politics and the current role it plays in political decision-making would only ratify Hacking's view on the many successes of statistics as a form of thinking and doing. It is also, in my view, a perfect case of what Bourdieu called practical sense, as discussed in chapter two: Social statistics became practical by the very force of its imperfectability, thus, for its ever-perfectible character, which makes of it also such reasonable a tool – how bad can its use be if it never means to offer more than enough truthfulness?

As this statistical reasoning merged with the 'fragile states' agenda, the statistical reasoning did not abandon its old ways. In fact, if anything, the old practices are reproduced in larger scale, with the help of ever more technological means and with impacts that would not have been foreseen by the nineteenth-century's most famous statistics enthusiasts. In this section I discuss the role of the central notions just explored – part of what I called the metaphysics of correlation – in measuring and classifying 'state fragility'. I argue the success of the science of the unknown is an essential part of what allows 'fragile states', with all its supposed causes, consequences and proposed solutions, to exist as political truths.

In this section, I focus on one feature of the 'fragile states' agenda, the idea of 'good enough' or 'fit-for-purpose' data, present in monitoring and

[39] Ibid., p. 107.

evaluation (M&E) practices towards 'state fragility'. Not that this is uniquely applied to 'fragile states', but I here seek to highlight the specific practices and impacts in this agenda. The idea of 'good enough data' is a first important step towards understanding the adaptation of M&E practices around notions of 'fitness of purpose', 'best fit approaches' and institutions, and 'good enough governance'. These ideas are intrinsically connected to the statistical reasoning that interpenetrated the agenda and tell as much about the urge to produce numbers, as about the expectations this quantified knowledge generates. The statistical reasoning that inherited the metaphysics of correlation does not require perfect causality, 'real' numbers or direct indicators (as opposed to proxies), and it values form, visualisation and consumption at least as much as it values numbers themselves. In that context, 'good enough data' is practical, acceptable and authoritative - its provisional character not a weakness, but a scientific acknowledgement of the (temporarily) unknown.

While many critics point to the inaccuracy of certain data, the choice of indicators or the artificial commensuration of certain political features of a state, one central consideration is missing: Analysts in general know the extent of the problems and limitations of the numbers they produce, so do the particular kind of consumers for whom the numbers are produced. Yet, these quantifying and classifying practices hold.

2.1. PROVISIONAL NUMBERS AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF IMPERFECTION

Lampland has a specific name for such cases, 'provisional numbers', which are knowingly temporary and incomplete, but not for that reason less used.[40] They are different from 'regular' numbers in that they are *not* 'referent to stable entities which carry the same meaning no matter what their context'.[41] Their 'value' is not in being 'real', but as I understand it, in creating *acceptable* and *practical* temporary political realities, that is, objects that help to investigate other social phenomena, a view that

[40] Hereafter, I use 'good enough data' and 'provisional numbers' rather interchangeably, but it is important to highlight that this is my own reading of Lampland's contribution. She makes no reference to 'good enough data'.
[41] Lampland 2009, p. 3.

resonates what Hacking calls 'scientific realism'.[42] Indeed, '[f]or those who use numbers day in and day out, the observation that numbers are temporary devices is banal.'[43] The issue is not that imperfect numbers need to be 'unmasked' but, instead, how they become accepted and authoritative in their known imperfection.

Critics who focus on errors as if they are weakness in the statistical reasoning alone worth of the critique fail to realise that errors are very much part of statistics' scientific profile, and also well known by those who produce and use them in an everyday basis.

After all, provisional numbers correspond to the style of thinking & doing in which context they are produced and studied, a style of reasoning that opens space for making science of the uncertainty. In that sense, I hereafter use 'provisional numbers', 'good enough data' and 'fit-for-purpose' data interchangeably; they are what their context make of them, and are made authoritative because they are part and productive of a specific style of thinking & doing. Lampland locates provisional numbers in the context of 'formalizing practices', which involve quantification, standardisation and rationalisation; they are practices which not only depend on and generate numbers and categories, but are also based on a specific style of reasoning.[44] '[I]n specific contexts numbers must be as temporary and as fluid as the quotidian, recurring processes used to stabilize experience and produce knowledge are.'[45]

I argue this temporary character becomes socially comfortable[46] in the context of the metaphysics of correlation discussed. The metaphysics of correlation analysed in the previous section is one that stands comfortably among uncertainties, errors and the unknown, as long as these are also modelled, measured and visualised. In that sense, provisional

[42] Hacking 2007, p. 41.
[43] Lampland 2009, p. 13.
[44] Remembering Bourdieu's and Hacking's discussion on reason: Both saw reason as profoundly historical, but not reducibly so. Indeed, this is one point in which Hacking expressly states his agreement with Bourdieu. From there, the authors slightly part ways in form, although not so much in substance: Bourdieu explored the scientific field to understand how reason 'continuously (re)produces' the 'institutional bases for rational thought', while Hacking took what he called an 'ecological' approach to reason, in that it considered human capacities, mental and physical, and thus, the cognitive possibilities in each style of reasoning. See Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 48; Bourdieu 2008b, pp. 41-41; Hacking 2012, p. 600.
[45] Lampland 2009, p. 14.
[46] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 67.

numbers are not only acceptable but very much in agreement with the style of thinking & doing discussed so far. As seen, precisely because this style of reasoning turns errors, uncertainty and the unknown into science, it also invokes a perennial re-work of numbers and practices: 'Idealized conditions are never reached, with the consequence that the need to adjust, accommodate, and re-calibrate is ever present.'[47] The style of thinking & doing based on quantification and taxonomy is, thus, made to last also by the virtue of its partly provisional character.

Similarly to Lampland, I do not argue there are only provisional numbers in the 'fragile states' agenda. Nevertheless, as the target of so many critics when it comes to data collection, analysis and repercussion is often based on such numbers, they become an interest point for discussion. The bottom line is that this data, be it called by scholars 'good enough', 'fit-for-purpose' or provisional, is not necessarily named as such by producers and users, but are practically acknowledged as 'provisional' in the context in which they become accepted.

2.2. GOOD ENOUGH DATA: THE PRACTICALITY OF IMPERFECTION

Indeed, 'fragile states' are largely seen as major challenges to M&E practices, and although no specific term is officially used in guidelines or parameters for the practices of staff in donor agencies, there is a commonsensical acceptance that in the case of 'fragile states', the standards for data need to be flexible, which in fact indicates data can be *good enough*. The term encapsulates well the overall rationale that in contexts where data collection and analysis are extremely difficult and action needs to be sped-up, good enough data is seen as better than no data at all.

To look into these elements, I analyse the case of the Education sector in Timor-Leste and the impacts of good enough data or provisional numbers produced in this context being absorbed and reverberating in the World Bank's CPIA exercise. The case illustrates both the practical acceptance of such data and its adapted standards, and the unintended powerful impacts it can have on the classification of 'fragile states' through

[47] Lampland 2009, p. 8.

practices of M&E.

> Have you ever had indicators that you stopped using after criticism?
>
> One indicator we had to improve or change was related to school enrolment. It wasn't *fit for purpose*. No data is perfect, all are estimates. The MDGs on Education are not about enrolment, they are about completion, but there are no numbers on completion because there are no indicators. Schools don't usually have this.[48]

The indicator on completion is more complex than it may look because it involves data that is not often recorded and because it encompasses other numbers that are usually difficult to collect, such as the number of children out of school. I select the latter indicator for my illustration.

The indicator on 'out-of-school children' might shed light on how many children enrolled but never completed the course, either because they failed exams or because they dropped out. It is rich in examples of how the unknown become scientific through numbers, how the metaphysics of correlation previously discussed impact the way knowledge is understood and used, and the many powerful and unintended impacts of practices of M&E towards 'fragile states'.

> In Timor-Leste, how do you usually collect data if access to information is sometimes difficult or if there is no infra-structure to help?
>
> We have something, we call it '*good enough data approach'*, like in the case of the Education Management Information System [EMIS], which is *relatively comprehensive and reliable*. But also the GPE process is intended for states with limited capacity. First, we rely on international agencies to collect data on behalf of the country when capacity is missing. My teams also collect data. The EMIS is also very good; they get technical advice and support from the World Bank.[49]

As a key part of the MDGs indicators on Education, the rate of children out of school is measured even if numbers are known to be far from perfect. I here discuss the specific use of this indicator in the application of Timor-Leste for additional financing from the Global

[48] Interview with Neil Fantom.
[49] Interview with Stephen Close. However, a document produced by the government actually considers the EMIS rather inefficient; 'its information is not up-to-date and accurate…and the operation of the system is still largely dependent on international personnel.' This brings certain irony as to why, perhaps, the World Bank's officer quoted above places more trust in the system. See Timor-Leste Government 2011a.

Partnership for Education (GPE), for which the World Bank is a Supervisor Entity.

In this application and in the monitoring of the projects that followed, a mix of international databases, national strategic plans and UN datasets were used to fill in the blanks in data.[50] In fact, for many of its own measuring and evaluation, the World Bank feeds from the same databases used by GPE, from the Education Policy and Data Center, in Washington.[51] As one set of provisional numbers that are *good enough*, these measurements are very successful in creating an aura of objectivity but do not necessarily explain neither the Timorese Education sector, in this case, nor why this aspect of the sector should impact the classification of Timor-Leste as a 'fragile state'. Yet, these numbers travel, are absorbed, accepted and influence changes in the standards of practices and results.[52]

The 'rate of children out of school' is perceived by statisticians themselves as a measurement highly prone to error. A GPE report acknowledges that it does not capture irregular attendance patterns, and it is usually measured either through administrative records or household surveys,[53] both only good enough for the task. Administrative records can be biased through over- or under-reporting, can contain errors transplanted from census-based projections (good enough predictions based on inferences and correlations regarding the whole of the population), and only reaches formal education. Household surveys, in turn, are not specially designed to target education, and measurements regarding the rate of out-of-school children can ignore erratic attendance or non-attendance after enrolment. Moreover, not all practices of data collection, whichever they are, can happen at the same time to level collection and, thus, attendance records.[54] The GPE tested the use of household surveys to measure the rate of out-of-school children in an Indian district and in fact registered a 'strong underestimation' of more than 50 percent.[55] Yet, not only the rate of out-of-school children is a constantly used indicator in most development indices, as it can also be a crucial one.

[50] Global Partnership for Education 2012, ch. 1.
[51] Education Policy and Data Center (EPDC), 'About'. For the connection between the databases, see World Bank 2009, p. 23; World Bank, 'EPDC Educational Attainment Model'.
[52] For a discussion, see Rocha de Siqueira 2014.
[53] See glossary in Annex 8.
[54] Global Partnership for Education 2012, p. 8, box 1.1.
[55] Ibid.

The rate of out-of-school children has an important impact in the analysis of the outcomes produced by a GPE project in any partner country, as one of the indicators in the cluster of Education. In the M&E practices that accompany the GPE grant to a 'fragile state', performance is crucial, as it stands for 1/3 of the weight in the allocation formula – the other 2/3 being distributed between population size and country needs.[56] The government of Timor-Leste has been a 'partner country' since 2005, having the World Bank as a Supervisor Entity, responsible for developing a programme for the indicative amount to be allocated.[57] That means that the 'state fragility' label has at least three direct impacts in these dynamics; it helps to define eligibility (Timor-Leste is defined as a 'fragile state' by the World Bank),[58] it is numerically part of the resource allocation formula under 'Needs' ('fragility' is measured as a 0-1 variable),[59] and it determines the amount of resources the Supervisor Entity, or the World Bank, will receive itself for supervision work – if the state is 'fragile', the allocation for the Supervisor Entity is double the usual $100,000 per year.[60] Nevertheless, the connection between the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' by the World Bank and this instance of provisional numbers is also very diffuse and can be much more subtle and pervasive.

As discussed, the rate of out-of-school children will determine the rate of success of a project, that is, the performance of a 'fragile state'. In the case of Timor-Leste, where the Supervisor Entity is the World Bank, the projects related to the GPE grant and supervised by the Bank will also count towards the *Country Portfolio Rating* (CPR), which measures the rate of the Bank's successful projects and is an essential component of the CPIA formula (see formulae in the previous chapter).[61] The first data to fill in the CPR, as seen, comes from subjective write-ups produced by World Bank's local teams. These documents are not made public, but one can expect that the indicator on children out of school will have been absorbed

[56] Global Partnership for Education January 2012, p. 2.
[57] Global Partnership for Education, 'Board of Directors'. A Supervisor Entity is chosen by a board of directors, with representatives from 'developing country partners', donor partners, civil society organisations, private sector and foundations, and multilateral agencies.
[58] Global Partnership for Education, 'Eligibility for Program Implementation Grants'. However, this specific criterion would still hold even if the Supervisor Entity was not the World Bank.
[59] See Annex 4.
[60] Global Partnership for Education, 'Program Implementation Grant Guidelines', pp. 3-4.
[61] World Bank May 2010, p. 3.

by the reports produced by the team and will become somehow reflected on the write-ups.

For this part of the exercise, the CPIA Education indicators, as others, are rated from 1 to 6, and the benchmark results serving as guidelines for staff include considerations such as '[s]trategic national education policies, high standards, and effective use of public and private resources support a good quality, universal basic education system', to be rated by staff according to his/her perception of how successful the country has been in this realm.[62] It is reasonable to expect such perception will naturally borrow from indicators seen in reports and projects, the only ones available. Thus, the indicator on children out of school crosses to a new realm.

After the write-ups reach the headquarters in Washington, they will be '*calibrated*', in a respondent's words, across sector or network (Education) and region (East Asia and Pacific), to make sure ratings are relatively consistent in between similar countries and in the same sector.[63] Thus, *calibration* is a practical adaptation to final consistency, that is, to level measures so as to make them congruent with a practical understanding of the 'common' in the Sector or Region. On the other hand, staff members in the field practically make their ratings adequate considering the calibration they anticipate.

> We are supposed to recognise the fragile states characteristics in the country context. When the project is being prepared, they [in the headquarters] will assess if we adequately analysed the risks of the project, for instance. It is always safer to overestimate the risks. Often, task-leaders will be criticised for underestimating them.[64]

Practically anticipating the calibration in the headquarters, staff members in the field increase the measures. A pre-established notion of countries' degrees of 'fragility', therefore, is necessary to determine this balance, as much as the 'calibration' will numerically classify 'fragile states'. The balance is based on the common sense of local teams, who produce the write-ups, and headquarters staff, who subjectively encode 'efforts', 'problems' and 'results', group countries and make ratings compatible and

[62] See Annex 2. World Bank 10 September 2009, p. 26. This is the most recent available.
[63] Interview with Rui Coutinho.
[64] Anonymised information.

averaged. Interestingly, the write-ups are the main form through which an understanding of 'relative effort' or 'relative performance in the face of specific obstacles' is accounted for, based on local staff's perception of the situation in the country. However, in the 'calibration' process across Regions and Networks, ratings are averaged, and although the stated purpose is exactly to acknowledge differences in comparison with other similar countries, the idea of relative performance is lost among arbitrary averages, inferences and commensuration.

There is in this process a constant back and forth of subjective and perceived objective elements: The rate of out-of-school children, made out of good enough data, *perhaps practically and pre-emptively counter-calibrated*, circulates as objective measure; it reaches the headquarters, where write-ups from local teams and calibration by Region and Network – based on the respective staff's understanding of what numbers should 'logically' be to establish a normal rating, by encoding and comparison; that is, 'kinds' of countries and 'types' of problems and results are encoded, made commensurate and grouped in order to achieve comparability. Timor-Leste's results on Education will need to be compatible to the country's position as better performer among other East Asia and Pacific countries, and its positions as lagging behind in this specific sector of Education if compared to, for instance, non-'fragile states'.[65]

As seen in the previous chapter, when this calibration is finished, ratings for all criteria are gathered in their respective clusters, which are averaged and then included with their specific weights in the final formula to determine the country's CPIA score. In composite indicators such as those in the CPIA multi-dimensional ranking, clusters are not correlated; instead, each criterion, thus each cluster, is correlated to the dependent variable, in this case, 'countries with good policies and institutions'. It is established that, for example, a low number of children out of school is correlated with good education policies, which in turn are correlated to the overall performance of a country in terms of policies and institutions. In this correlation, as pointed out by many, there is an undue total

[65] Documents of these intermediate steps are not made public, including write-ups and any supporting documents for the calibration process or minutes of meetings where decisions are made. I gathered the information from interviews with Rui Coutinho, Stephen Close and Khadija Sheik, besides counting on the details published in official documents about the CPIA exercise; hence, my description is thusly limited.

compensation:[66] If scores are low in Education, a sub-area of criterion 9, 'Building Human Resources', but high in Health, another sub-area under the same criterion, one might unduly elevate the total score of that criterion. The same goes for compensation between criteria in the same cluster, which might unduly elevate the score for the cluster as a whole.[67] Hence, a provisional number such as 'out-of-school children' might contribute to lower or raise the rating for different criteria or the cluster itself, having a definite, if small and indirect, impact in the final classification.

Remembering a quote from the previous chapter by the same World Bank member of staff who spoke of a 'good enough data approach', it is important to highlight how much 'good enough data' goes into the CPIA exercise by also taking into account how much work is expected from country teams: The country team leader for the GPE projects was in charge of 13 countries in the East Asia and Pacific region and was required to visit each every six months to follow up projects. (S)he unilaterally decided to pay monthly visits instead, but still, (s)he admits (s)he had not been able to visit all of them by the time (s)he was to produce the write-ups for the CPIA exercise.[68] (S)he points at the many pressures in the Bank for quick data and says the Bank's environment is characterised as one of hard work and rigorous peer-review, which leaves one to conclude that in the context of matching rigour and the virtual impossibility of producing perfect numbers, 'good enough data' became an acceptable, common and *practical* reality. The end use of 'good enough data' is hardly pre-established, it can hardly be programmed and does not point to possible authorship, considering the intricate ways in which the numbers travel.[69] Yet, it is one, if small, crucial step in the quantification and classification of 'fragile states'.

Considering the pressures and limitations in data collection and analysis, it is not hard to understand how 'good enough data' or provisional numbers make themselves acceptable, authoritative and, actually, *the* very 'standards of good reason' in the quantifying and classifying practices towards 'fragile states'. There is in this process an imbued reasoning that eliminates the need to 'explain'; what we find instead are good enough

[66] Gutiérrez Sanín, Buitrago et al. 2011; Grävingholt, Ziaja et al. 2012.
[67] See Annex 2.
[68] Interview with Stephen Close.
[69] See Rocha de Siqueira 2014.

correlations that in their imperfection become practical and powerful. When the very reasoning is that errors are not a problem as long as they are approximate enough, accounted for, measured and pointed out, fit-for-purpose or provisional numbers are a natural part of the data.

The next section adds more practicality to this analysis, by discussing how good enough data can also modify the standards of the very practices of M&E towards 'fragile states', hence contributing to adapt method to data and also to authenticate methods' own provisional status.

3. OFFICIALISING FLEXIBILITY: FOR EACH DATASET ITS OWN METHODS

The ever-perfectible character of certain political numbers and the ephemeral correlation they point at authenticate each other by adjusting standards towards compatibility – not perfection. After all, in the absence of external canons of truth – abandoned with causality – classifications and measurements in use become the very 'standards of good reason'. It does not matter that there is a stated recognition that no perfection can be reached. It is enough that the measurement keeps assessing its own limitations. In the case of the 'fragile states' agenda, limitations in data and goals are ubiquitous; meanwhile methods do not die out, they adapt to modified standards that they help to create by delineating themselves their limitations.

In this section, I discuss how this mutual self-authentication works specifically in terms of the officialisation of flexible procedures by the World Bank and OECD in the 'fragile states' agenda. While 'good enough data' becomes accepted and routinised, the World Bank and OECD also lean towards applying 'best fit' approaches to M&E in 'fragile states'.

3.1. QUALITY IS RELATIVE

> Identifying appropriate indicators on FCS [fragile and conflict-affected states]-related issues that can be used in a project results framework could be a challenging task. First, indicators usually refer to broad concepts such as fragility, resilience, peace, and/or stability that are difficult to measure. Second, indicators are influenced by numerous elements in the project context. Third, observable changes in FCS context are normally a long-term undertaking. *Nevertheless*, project teams should explore the possibility to find and identify indicators relevant to their projects and

> whether changes in those indicators may be attributable to the project interventions.[70]

The guidebook quoted above was prepared by the World Bank to frame M&E practices in the context of Managing for Development Results (MfDR), discussed in the previous chapter. It details how to adapt the standards for methods related to M&E practices; for instance, by using '"*good enough*" proxy indicators relevant to the project when measuring complex issues (e.g., state presence could be measured by communities in which administrative offices are functioning).'[71] This is an example of substantial change to methods of M&E in 'fragile states' based on the kind of 'good enough data' discussed in the previous section. The overall rationale, as expressed in an OECD document, is that now the '[q]uality [of data] is defined as "*fitness for use*" in terms of user needs.' Moreover, the document suggests that '[t]his definition is broader than has been customary [sic] used in the past when quality was equated with accuracy.'[72] This step does not so much make inaccuracy acceptable, but flexibilises the understanding of quality itself. The quality of data and method in the context of 'fragile states' is seen as also a matter of capacity of absorbing data, speeding-up decision-making and responding to emergencies when emergencies come:

> Even if data is accurate, they cannot be said to be of good quality if they are produced too late to be useful, or cannot be easily accessed, or appear to conflict with other data. Thus, quality is viewed as a multi-faceted concept. The quality characteristics of most importance depend on user perspectives, needs and priorities, which vary across groups of users.[73]

In this flexibilisation of standards in method and data, there are two fundamental ideas, timeliness and accessibility, said to be especially relevant in the case of 'fragile states'.

> How is data analysed in the context of your work in the field?
>
> We provide briefs, what we call *just-in-time reports*, different products to the clients, so that they can be used in the way that is more relevant to the country. In my view, there is always a problem: Rigorous standards of analysis and presentation can be at the expense of the *accessibility* for the clients. The priority

[70] World Bank 2013, p. 17. My emphasis.
[71] Ibid. My emphasis.
[72] OECD 17 Jan 2012, p. 7.
[73] Ibid.

> in doing best-quality products means that there may be less likelihood that clients will read the reports. There is always a risk of reports being left on the shelf.[74]

In the context of balancing accuracy and practicality, both the World Bank and the OECD have been adapting M&E in 'fragile states' to become compatible with situations of limited data collection and analysis. It is still an incipient process and donors are clearly hesitant in using any official terminology that might indicate 'inaccuracy'; however, the flexibilisation of practices is increasingly patent in official documents and is certainly clearly expressed by staff in terms of common sense decisions routinely taken and tacitly accepted, as the interview above highlights. For instance, even before the operational changes in the World Bank, discussed in the previous chapter, procedures were already adapted *in loco* as staff working in Timor-Leste perceived the need to accept that certain methods for analysis would need to be adapted to the country's ministerial capacity.

> How were things implemented in Timor-Leste at the beginning, considering the difficulties?
>
> Sometimes people need to see failure to adjust. At the beginning, there were over-planning, over-reporting, things were overly sophisticated. With the Public Finance Management Capacity Building Programme, for example: The manager was hesitant to take it to the Board, it was too demanding. They ended up having to reformulate it one year later. Sometimes it's really in time of crisis that changes happen. Sometimes, it needs to become evident that something is not working in order for it to be improved.[75]

The first documents related to the Public Finance Management Building Programme in Timor-Leste, mentioned above, dated from 2005, were brief and at the same time ambitious in expectations: The training programmes involved 'including short-term consultant inputs, professional development programs, distance learning events, language training, and specialized workshops'; continued placement of advisers; integration, expansion and related training regarding new systems for finance management; a special funding for 'creative thinking' pending application and planning by the ministry; and 'essential project management and performance monitoring costs, including local travel and communications,

[74] Interview with Stephen Close.
[75] Interview with Anonymous 1.

and language interpretation'.[76] In 2006, after the 'failure' mentioned by the officer from the quote above, the document prepared by the World Bank was much longer and more detailed, with incremental results to be achieved in smaller scopes than expressed in the 2005 document. It expressed the need to *adapt* – the word had not been used in the 2005 document. It ends with a note:

> Preparation of the program benefited from technical diagnostic reports and assessments of experience with capacity building in Timor-Leste. These studies, and the GoTL's direct input based on its own assessment of its *capacity constraints*, provided the foundation for the design of the program.[77]

It also contains an extremely detailed table of 'risks' to the implementation of the project, most related to constraints in capacity.[78] The risks were accompanied by proposed pre-emptive solutions for each possible problem to be faced. It is clear that the one-year gap in between the documents culminated in a more carefully phrased and phased plan of action.

The example serves to illustrate the constant and mutual influence of practices developed and adapted *in loco* and the official adoption of procedures that are seen to respond to the need to make adaptations, so that their effectiveness can also be measured, monitored and evaluated. The practical sense that leads staff to adapt practices in the field reflects an understanding of what 'fragile states' are and how to remedy 'state fragility' as much as it contributes to shape these ideas. 'One of the fundamental effects of the alignment between practical sense and objectified sense is the production of a world of common sense.'[79] The common sense, as all common senses, was widespread.

The OECD's document *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility* is an eloquent illustration of the way the organisation also moved towards tailoring practices of M&E to 'fragile states'. The document makes an interesting division between impacts produced at the programme level and results produced on the context, that

[76] World Bank 2005, pp. 2-3.
[77] World Bank 2006b, p. 27. My emphasis.
[78] Ibid., p. 25.
[79] Bourdieu 1980, p. 97. 'Un des effets fondamentaux de l'accord entre le sens pratique et le sens objectivé est la production d'un monde de sens commun.'

is, on the big picture related to peace and the state itself. What the document says, in practice, is that, while at a very micro level, M&E practices might be able to determine if a specific action, part of a particular project, *caused* a certain result, this rationale cannot or can hardly be extended to the big picture.

> The rigorous quantitative methods associated with impact evaluation and randomised control trials are considered not feasible in many situations of conflict and fragility, (although useful experiments are underway at the programme level). Still, it is particularly difficult to apply such methods to high-level questions of peace and conflict across various interventions at country level or to assessments of overall donor engagement in a conflict setting. Where causality cannot be reliably determined using rigorous methods, evaluators may present *plausible explanations* for their conclusions regarding impact, though *limitations should be made explicit*.[80]

The document adds that, following this division in two levels, it may be necessary to change the focus from 'impacts' to 'outputs' when conducting M&E in 'fragile states' – that is, to acknowledge what a specific intervention can achieve, and how it might correlate with the overall goal of developing 'fragile states' without any possible certainty of this impact. The document repeatedly warns that '[f]ewer rigorous methods are used and questions of causality are often inadequately addressed' in such assessments.[81] Again, the issue in evidence is not so much perfect accuracy, but 'adequately adjusted methods' – rigour, not rigidity – and the understanding that certain aspects of project implementation will only ever modestly account for identified results, not explain them.

3.2. FLEXIBLE METHODS: DONORS' CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS TO ADAPT

There is yet another crucial aspect of this advocated adaptability in M&E towards 'fragile states'. It comes, or so it is said, as a result of donors' realisation that although aid was growing, results were not yet satisfactory:

> There is…an increasing body of evidence to suggest that aid aimed at achieving sustainable peace and development is not making a lasting contribution to peace and development. In 2005, a review of more than 75

[80] OECD 2012, p. 68. My emphasis.
[81] Ibid., p. 17.

> evaluations in the conflict fragility field pointed to substantial weaknesses in programme effectiveness, design, and management.[82]

Practices of M&E, thus, also became a matter of donors' *capacity and willingness* to improve their own analyses and projects – an ironic play with the words so often used to measure and define 'state fragility' itself.[83] With that search for improvement, came the need to constantly balance speed and quality.

> Evaluators must prepare for risks, develop robust designs, and ensure *sufficient flexibility* to counter the challenges of *unpredictability and complexity*. They should select methods that help to capture complex social change processes and illuminate interactions between interventions and the context.[84]

Hence, on the one side, practices and objectives need to be 'evaluable';[85] on the other, evaluations and evaluators need to adapt to the limitations in the very framing of solutions proposed for 'fragile states'. Development and peace are too ample goals for causality to hold; the metaphysics of correlation, in turn, applies quite well. The re-standardised methods both adapt to the said volatility of 'fragile states' *and* contribute to compose this 'fragility', by reinforcing the view that, in such contexts, nothing is stable. In the face of time and technical efficiency constraints, methods that achieve 'enough' become 'standards of good reason'.

> Regarding the compacts guidance [part of the New Deal], a lot of this is still perfectible, but we decided we need to move ahead, we are going to get them as good as we can get and then push them out.[86]

As donors promote the use of 'best fit' M&E approaches to 'fragile states', however, it is perhaps inevitable that the limitations of explaining how and what results can be achieved lead to a management of expectations regarding the very solutions generally proposed. The similarity in terminology is telling: 'good enough' or 'fit-for-purpose data', 'best fit approaches' or methods, and finally, 'best fit institutions' or 'good enough

[82] OECD 2012, p. 22.
[83] For an example of document produced on this basis, see OECD and the World Bank 2006.
[84] OECD 2012, p. 32. My emphasis.
[85] Ibid., p. 33.
[86] Quote from a representative from a donor agency, Anonymous 2. My transcript from INCAF High-Level Ministerial Meetings, 2013. Anonymous under Chatham House Rules. .

governance'. The style of thinking & doing based on official imperfection advances a view of objectivity and scientificity, while all along also creating its very adaptable standards. The convergence is both a common sense and a practical construction. In the next section I explore how 'good enough data' and 'best fit approaches' help delineate what remedies are proposed, tailoring expectations regarding what 'fragile states' can achieve in terms of peace and governance.

4. GOVERNANCE FIT FOR 'FRAGILITY'

In the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', the flexibility of the method is connected to the flexibility of the solutions proposed and, thus, to the 'degrees of fragility' the statistical reasoning contributes to establish as common sense in the agenda. The imperfection of quantification and the imperfection of classification hold hands and by doing so the imperfection recreates itself; it limits the reality of what it measures by managing expectations of how this reality can be transformed.

I suggest in this section that the 'routines of encoding and taxonomy'[87] produced in practices of quantification allow for the political existence of different categories of 'states', numerically and, thus, minutely differentiated. In this context, 'good enough governance' is a specific remedy for a particular case. I argue here that the move is circular: Quantification, classification, political realities and solutions are mutually influential and part of a self-authenticating style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. The quantifying and classifying reasoning implies that '[t]o communicate information in the aggregate, we must first classify',[88] and to classify complex political issues, one needs also to compile and aggregate a certain volume of data. This is an excellent description of a ranking's engines.

In the case of 'fragile states', the increasing volume of quantified analyses regarding 'fragile states' allows for more 'granular'[89] categorisations and specific labels and, thus, also has an impact on the kinds of solutions that become proposed and accepted. In turn, more

[87] Ibid., p. 307.
[88] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 68.
[89] A much favoured word in interviews with statisticians.

specific categories invite efforts to refine and tailor practices towards these groups; hence, more statistical analyses are produced. 'One may try to hold a representation constant and change practice to match it, or vice-versa.'[90] In these dynamics, there is as an idea that donors' practices and propositions need to be '*realistic*', which so well resonates Hacking's pragmatic stance on reality: 'New ways to tell the truth about X change our conceptions about X', and vice-versa.[91] Hence, being 'realistic' is practical and self-evident.

4.1. GOOD ENOUGH GOVERNANCE

The idea of 'good enough governance' is throughout expressed in documents and informal settings, although diversely named. Central to it is the notion of '*tailoring*', that is, making problems, analyses, projects and solutions compatible. The term 'good enough governance' itself was used in 2002 by Merilee Grindle in a study commissioned by the World Bank. The purpose was to discuss how development aid could take into account 'feasibility' and prioritise interventions, rather than expecting full accomplishment of many perfect tasks at once. A long list of disordered 'unrealistic' expectations, she said, would only hinder the goal of poverty reduction.[92] The paper had been commissioned exactly to analyse how development aid and poverty reduction could be made mutually supportive.[93] 'Good enough governance' would be 'a condition of *minimally acceptable* government performance and civil society engagement that does not significantly hinder economic and political development and that permits poverty reduction initiatives to go forward.'[94] She argues:

> ….'good enough governance' may become a more *realistic* goal for many countries faced with the goal of reducing poverty. Working toward good enough governance means accepting a more *nuanced* understanding of the evolution of institutions and government capabilities; being explicit about trade-offs and priorities in a world in which all good things cannot be

[90] Ibid., p. 193.
[91] Ibid., p. 605.
[92] Grindle 2004, p. 525.
[93] As seen in the previous chapter, this was after the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) had become central in the World Bank and IMF analyses of 'fragile states' and essential in the decision of what volume of resources to allocate. As also discussed, the PRSPs have always been intensely criticised.
[94] Grindle 2002, p. 2. My emphasis.

> pursued at once; learning about what's working rather than focusing solely on governance gaps; taking the role of government in poverty alleviation seriously; and grounding action in the *contextual* realities of each country.[95]

Interestingly, in a 2007 revision of this first paper, Grindle takes issue precisely with methodology:

> Methodological choices about how to study the issue of governance and development have considerable impact on findings; 'large N' studies tend to find consistent correlations between development and good governance, while 'small-N' studies tend to demonstrate that development is not fully dependent on 'getting governance right.[96]

She suggests that in the hast of transforming academic research into policy, reports 'short-change methodological and empirical ambiguities', and argues it is not a given at all, for example, that good governance contributes to growth and poverty reduction – 'there remain doubts about issues of measurement, causality and sequence.'[97] Yet, she does not propose a dismissal of M&E practices; in fact, she says analysts seem to agree, including herself, that 'although the measurement of good governance is problematic and inexact, it is worth the effort to attempt such work in order to clarify thinking and to set a basis for cross-national and longitudinal *comparisons*.'[98]

In addition, at the end of her 2007 article, she proposes that the different levels of 'fragility' be used as signposts to calibrate intervention and, thus, to determine the contents and limits of 'good enough governance':

> As the notion of fragile states suggests, states differ in terms of their institutions, organisation and legitimacy. At a very general level, weak (or collapsed) states are characterised by low (or very low) structural/institutional stability, low (or very low) organisational capacity, and strongly questioned (or non-existent) legitimacy. In contrast, stronger states demonstrate higher levels of structural/institutional stability, organisational capacity and legitimacy. It is reasonable to assume that such characteristics set the general constraints within which governance interventions can be successfully introduced and carried out. Thus, practitioners concerned about *matching* interventions to the characteristics of particular countries might begin by assessing the strength and coherence of the state in the particular country.[99]

[95] Grindle 2004, p. 525. My emphasis.
[96] Grindle 2007, p. 555.
[97] Ibid., p. 561.
[98] Ibid., p. 555. My emphasis.
[99] Ibid., p. 562.

In different phrasings, the idea took off, not just born out of Grindle's texts, of course, but also borrowing from the 1990s and early-2000s debates on aid effectiveness and the relationship between security and development, as seen. 'Matching', 'tailoring', 'fitting' became common verbs, just as '*realistic*' became a necessary virtue of evaluation and evaluators.

Thus, in 2009, a World Bank document investigating the links between governance, conflict and 'fragility' also argued for 'good enough governance' to become a standard goal. It suggested the notion would bring a '*nuanced* understanding' of 'settings that are not ideal': 'Governance reform in fragile and conflict-affected environments must be built on *realistic* objectives and *context*-specific approaches.'[100] The World Bank's 2011 *WDR*, in turn, expressly placed '*best fit institutions*' at the core of the report, arguing for interventions to be adapted to 'local conditions'.[101] Among the guidelines to develop 'the best fit strategy and programs' for each 'fragile state', the *WDR* recommends '[b]eing more *realistic* about the number of priorities identified and the timelines.'[102]

I suggest these changes in approach were and are a reflection of the change in the official framing of the tasks, of the already on-going commonsensical adaptations staff applied in their work and of the very limitations made political truths by changes in the standards related to data and methods.

> How was the context in the World Bank when the Global Center on Conflict, Security and development was founded? What were you trying to achieve?
>
> We had concluded the [2011] WDR exercise and there was a question of how we were going to implement it. The question was: How should our work change when working in these countries [fragile states]? We knew before that we needed to do something different but the WDR organised this. In terms of fragile states, there was an understanding even before that they were different. [103]
>
> How was the context when you worked for the World Bank in Timor-Leste? What kind of services were you offering?

[100] Agborsangaya-Fiteu Oct 2009, p. 3. My emphasis.
[101] See World Bank 2011b, p. 8. It is worth highlighting that I use the term 'interventions' broadly, not, of course, in terms of military action.
[102] World Bank 2011a, pp. 22-23.
[103] Interview with Gary Milante.

> The hegemonic thinking of the time [2004] was not so much poverty any more, but governance, institutions as magical wands, instead of being endogenous. There was a belief that these institutions would change reality, so there was pressure to have sophisticated systems. I always use an analogy to explain: Imagine a guy who lives in a tropical country goes to a tailor and asks for a suit. The tailor then looks at the model the guy drew and says 'that's fine, I'll do it, but you need long sleeves'. The guys answers 'But it's hot here!' The tailor replies 'But suits have longs sleeves'. The guy agrees but the tailor keeps going: 'You also need pockets'. The client says to that: 'I don't carry anything!'… By the end of the process, the guy will have a beautiful and expensive traditional suit that, nonetheless, does not suit his conditions. That's what we do.[104]

Here a caveat is in order: Perhaps there was already a 'feeling', before the 2011 *WDR* that adaptation in the solutions proposed was necessary, but this was certainly mixed in application. Donors' and 'fragile states' government's understandings of 'flexibility' were always contentious, as the discussion on Timor-Leste in the previous chapter sought to highlight. I come back to this important point in chapter six. Nonetheless, the practice of 'realistic' flexibility became widespread.

4.2. 'TIMOR-APPROPRIATE' GOVERNANCE

In the case of OECD countries, or the INCAF specifically, these moves were very much reflected on the 2009 and 2011 exercises of the *Monitoring International Engagement in Fragile States*, of which, as seen, Timor-Leste was voluntarily a pilot country. The exercise is an interesting reflection of the 'best fit' debate and the role of data and M&E practices in the changes advocated in the 'fragile states' agenda.

Crucially, the 2009 *Monitoring* report had a whole section devoted to the theme of 'good enough governance'. As the exercise involved different meetings and interviews with international (including the World Bank) and national stakeholders, opinions cannot be individually attributed. However, in one specific section devoted to governance, it is clearly reported that 'one development partner' argued for a change from 'ideal' to 'good enough governance' or yet, a '*Timor-appropriate system of governance*'.[105] The report states:

> Participants stressed that 'good enough' governance is not about compromising respect for the rule of law, human rights or accountability.

[104] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[105] OECD 2010a, p. 17. My emphasis.

> Rather, it is about supporting systems, structures and approaches that are appropriate for the local context, i.e. affordable, sustainable, and taking into account local culture and capacity. 'Good enough' governance is also about starting with the basic set of conditions needed for a functioning state and progressively building them up over time.[106]

Interestingly, here the requests of Timor-Leste, the g7+, World Bank and OECD seem to agree. The above quote, for instance, does not seem to have been denied or refuted by any Timorese representatives, nor have I heard of a disagreement of this kind in the interviews I conducted. Disagreements as to *how* adaptations of standards should be made are, of course, multiple, as will be discussed in chapter six. However, adaptable M&E practices, tailored solutions and 'realistic expectations' are expressed parts of the g7+'s agenda since its inception and essential elements in the group's advocacy for a country-owned and country-led development process. It is in this intersection, thus, that I look at how the g7+'s initiatives have so far connected to the changes discussed up until this point. It is not yet time to analyse the g7+'s position in terms of relations of power, but it is important to take a first step in understanding what parts of the changes explored so far in the chapter are also part of the g7+'s propositions and how so.

5. 'GOOD ENOUGH' AND THE G7+

> The F in FOCUS, stands for fragility assessment, now a sound methodology developed by us, for us in the g7+, with support from our partners to identify where we are as a country on the spectrum of fragility.[107]

The g7+ has so far made stated efforts to tailor practices, measures and solutions to the specificities of 'fragile states' as a group and, it is officially planned, of individual member countries. In advocating this tailoring, it has kept so far a relatively coherent focus on the adoption, in each step, of numbers and plans that can be developed and monitored by country members' own offices, using indicators that would be '*adaptable* to norms

[106] Ibid.
[107] Timor-Leste's Finance Minister Emília Pires's speech in the workshop that launched Timor-Leste's Fragility Assessment exercise. As seen, 'FOCUS' refers to one of the pillars of the g7+'s approach. See Pires 15 Aug 2012.

and traditions of the country and able to be localised to the country *context*.'[108] The three pillars of the agenda proposed by the group, FOCUS, TRUST and the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs), part of the *New Deal* discussed in the previous chapter, take issue with how data is collected in analyses regarding 'fragile states' and argue against ill-adapted development solutions that tend to reflect donors' models and side-line national specificities.[109]

In the 2010 *Dili Declaration*, the g7+ identified a list of 'challenges to achieve peacebuilding and statebuilding goals' in 'fragile states'; among them were '[u]nrealistic timeframes for reform, weak capacity to implement plans and limited effectiveness of capacity development approaches'; '[l]ack of data and reliable statistics to inform planning for peacebuilding and statebuilding'; and '[i]nsufficient flexibility, speed and predictability of transition financing and limited effectiveness of existing instruments.'[110] In terms of statistics, therefore, the main problem is said to lie not with the internal accuracy of the analyses *per se*, but with the fact that most M&E practices do not adapt enough to the varied contexts of 'fragile states', both as a group and as individual countries inside that group, and that they do not encourage the future use of national capacity. Hence, for example, the issue would not be that indicators are incorrectly measured, but that inappropriate indicators are used, instead of flexible models with contextually adapted indicators measured by national offices.

> Our fragility assessments are important as a first step. Sometimes assessments are done about us and we don't know anything about it! I say, do pay attention to details, do try to understand problems that countries face, don't just jump to the conclusions. We need to think outside the box, and more, try to step into someone else's shoes. We had some advisers once telling us that at that time electricity was not sustainable, not a good priority. I said: 'Take his passport, put him in a village in the middle of nowhere and let him feel on his skin how it is!'[111]

At the beginning of their work, the g7+'s working group on indicators, composed of 15 to 20 members of the IDPS and chaired by the UN and DRC, argued for the implementation of a 'bottom-up' approach to

[108] International Dialogue Secretariat 4 December 2012, Annex C, p. 24.
[109] g7+ 2010, p. 4. My emphasis.
[110] Ibid., p. 2.
[111] Quote from a g7+ representative. My transcript of the g7+ High-Level Meeting, UN General Assembly, 23 Sep 2013. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules.

select and develop indicators for the Fragility Assessments.[112] The expressed aims involved having 'simple, relevant indicators that can be adapted to the country context, reflecting both short and longer-term progress', which would 'avoid duplication with more general development indicators (e.g. MDGs)', and would also 'reinforce national statistical capacity, and emphasise reliable and transparent data collection mechanisms.'[113] The report on the undertaking of the exercise states:

> Each pilot country [including Timor-Leste] adopted a distinct approach to developing their fragility assessments, field-testing their spectrums, and identifying appropriate indicators, while maintaining the fundamental principles of a country-owned, country-led process that was participatory in nature. This exercise was led internally by the g7+ focal point within their institutional affiliation within government.[114]

I analyse the extent to which these aims were fulfilled when discussing power in chapter six. Here it is important to highlight the common lines of practice between the g7+'s agenda and the donors' approaches so far illustrated. Crucially, the g7+'s propositions around contextualised indicators has, among other goals, the objective to 'inform results measurement and M&E of national and/or partner-supported programmes.'[115] The data for the Timorese fragility assessment was collected in interviews, group discussion and 'desk studies', all guided by a set of main questions:

> 1. Where we are now, if compared with past situation?
> 2. What are the challenges that we all need to pay attention?
> 3. What needs to be done to improve?
> 4. Where are we in Fragility Stages and how we define our situation in stages?
> 5. How do we know whether we made any progress or not in the future? [sic][116]

The first to third questions fed the analysis of the country's PSGs summary and the fourth and fifth questions were used to determine the country's position in the Fragility Spectrum for each PSG. Qualitative information collected was quantified to be rated from 1 to 5 and scores were made equivalent to each stage of the Spectrum: crisis, rebuild-reform,

[112] See Annex 5.
[113] International Dialogue Secretariat 4 December 2012, p. 4.
[114] Ibid., p. 6.
[115] Ibid., p. 9.
[116] Timor-Leste Government 26 Feb 2013, p. 4.

transitions, transformation and resilience, respectively.[117] As previously seen, the Timorese assessment – or, for now, any of the others – does not rate the country with one averaged total score, but it does average the measurements for each PSG. For the data collection, each PSG was subdivided into dimensions and sub-dimensions and each PSG was allocated a few indicators, no more than five.[118] In the PSG2, Security, for instance, indicators included the 'number of police [sic] (by gender and district) with Tertiary Education from a total of Police [sic]' and the 'number of refugees (include IDPs) resulted from conflict'.[119] A simple average between these and other three indicators provide the score 3 (Transition) for the Timorese PSG2, on Security.[120]

As rankings on development do not usually include security indicators and this is precisely one of the g7+'s main advocacy lines, the PSG itself is unusual as a measure of 'state fragility' focused on improving development. It can also be said that the first indicator, on the Tertiary Education of police officers, is perhaps a quite particular one, probably derived from the problems the country faced in the 2006 crisis.[121] Tellingly, regarding these two specific indicators, the report recommends providing 'scholarship *to those who wish* to continue their study or provid[ing] relevant training to increase their skill and knowledge', in the case of the educational level of police officers. The report makes no recommendation to deal with the second indicator, on refugees, nor is this indicator quantified and weighted in the final PSG score.[122]

The examples illustrate well the stated mission of the g7+: 'The core mission of the g7+ is to promote peacebuilding and statebuilding as the foundations for transition out of the margins of conflict *to the next stage of sustainable development*.'[123] The key: not 'development', but '*the next stage*'. 'The long-term horizon can hardly be seen through the fog until the

[117] Ibid., p. 5.
[118] Ibid., Annexes 3 and 4. For an example, see Annex 6.
[119] Ibid, p. 34.
[120] See Annex 6.
[121] See discussion in previous chapter.
[122] Ibid., pp. 9-11.
[123] g7+, ' Pathways towards Resilience', p. 6.

basic architectures are in place, institutions have been strengthened and peace consolidated and forward planning can take place.'[124]

> The donors were following what? There was no leadership from the fragile states themselves, and you need that. Because they [donors] want to align their objectives with something and they couldn't. Align to what? There was no framework. It was all done by donors, so it was *their* understanding. They didn't understand our problems, they didn't understand our challenges, so we had to start something. They want to help, but if I, in a fragile state, don't tell them, they will do something else, because nobody else told them how to do it.[125]

> It is about doing the assessment ourselves, measuring ourselves, and focusing on our priorities, our structures, our national systems. Sometimes donors want to do something now but it will not be sustainable after they live, it's too much. We prefer what is sustainable. We are always being measured, ranked…We need to do it [the measurement] ourselves.[126]

In 'doing it themselves', the g7+ has so far followed some of the commonsensical practices in vogue in the 'fragile states' agenda: The group develop and is applying its own kind of M&E system in the form of Fragility Assessments; it has taken a practical approach towards data and method – 'we will do what we *can* do'; and it contextualises, categorises and manages expectations through a 'next step' approach towards development – the target being the next stage in the spectrum rather than the last one, in striking resemblance to the notion of 'good enough governance', at least in reasoning.

In that sense, the g7+'s quantification and classification also reflects a style of thinking & doing based on scientific uncertainty, or 'adaptable' scientificity. The core concern is not so much with the accuracy of measurements, with the labels applied along with the numbers, nor with the fact that quantification is taking place in such complex environments. Rather, these practices and the metaphysics of correlation embedded in them are very much present in g7+'s practices as well – having police officers with tertiary level of education is correlated with increasing security, which, in turn, correlates with a more developed country. Moreover, together, several of these correlations are able to tell where countries stand, individually, in a spectrum of five development positions. It is essential to stress these similarities and the practicality in them in order to

[124] Costa 2012, p. 100.
[125] Interview with Emília Pires. This 'they want to help' is of course highly debatable as it is.
[126] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar.

move on, in the next chapters, to understand their impacts in the relations of power in the 'fragile states' agenda.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter reflected on the status of 'practical use' and 'scientific authority' achieved by statistical reasoning through its ever-perfectible character. Re-inventing numbers in that context is a reasonable activity, not a rational one. The many successes of statistical reasoning in the nineteenth century contributed to make of statistics a powerful and practical tool by turning uncertainty and error into reasonable science. It follows that the reasoning that makes the quantification and classification of 'fragile states' so tantalising a project is old enough to breed in criticism. This chapter was based on the understanding that one cannot look at the possibilities of change without understanding what is it that makes this reasoning so powerful. Being accepted as incomplete and imperfect is the achievement of a style of thinking & doing that now is seen to 'work'.

As the chapter suggests, the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' not only constructs 'state fragility', it constructs the accepted method to 'understand' and act upon 'fragile states'; hence, the re-working of this method does not indicate a vanishing object, but a 'moving target'.[127] A moving target is one that is harder to hit but that, nonetheless, *is* a target. As the quantifying and classifying reasoning is constantly refined in search of better numbers and inferences, it leaves the political reality of 'fragile states' untouched. The idea that there are more efficient practices that can refine the method only stimulates the sense that the method and the object are right there for use and understanding.

The possibility raised by the transplantation of the metaphysics of correlation to the social sciences was that of turning disputable and artificial 'social numbers', so hard to be certain about, into political truths capable to anchor policy-making. This chapter traced the connections between this metaphysics of correlation, the ideas of 'good enough data', 'best fit' methods, 'good enough governance' and, crucially, the incipient practices

[127] Hacking 17 Aug 2006, p. 25.

with which the g7+ has been advocating the flexibility of methods and procedures, contextual development assistance and realistic expectations. I suggested these elements are all intrinsically and powerfully but subtly connected. They all borrow authority from the old and well established success of statistics in making science out of the unknown and they feed from the possibilities this generates of authenticating ever-perfectibility. Because social statistics are not aiming at truth, truthfulness can be just enough.

The 'fragile states' agenda relies on these achievements of statistics as much as it constitutes a perfect realm in which their ever-perfectible character can grow. As 'fragile states' present so many practical difficulties in data collection and analysis, methods are also acceptably flexible and tailored to the 'good enough data' possibly available. Methods become 'fit-for-purpose' by the need to speed-up decision-making and offering accessibility to ministries with perceived low capacity; however, the flexibility of these methods also allow for 'good enough data' and, thus, imperfection to be reproduced, along with the image of imperfection of the 'fragile state' itself. As 'fit-for-purpose methods' and 'good enough data' make evident the limitations of quantifying and classifying practices, such as M&E methods, it is also clear that the very correlation between variables is of limited understanding. Hence, it is practical and commonsensical to control and manage the expectations of what can be achieved through these methods. I suggested, thus, that these practices respond to practical sense, based on the pressures to produce accessible and well-timed analyses, staff's practical experience facing the limitations of all sorts in a 'fragile state', and the demands placed upon staff in the headquarters to also reflect the advocated need for flexibility in operational procedures.

The limitations the methods encounter indicate that interventions also need to be reduced in terms of expectations, contextualised, tailored and re-standardised. Borrowing Steven Epstein's brilliant terminology, I call this overall dynamic '*niche standardisation*'.[128] Niche standardisation creates intermediate categories that are made compatible precisely though their intermediate character: to 'fragile states', 'good enough governance'; to 'good enough governance', the 'best fit methods; to the 'best fit

[128] Epstein 2007, ch. 7.

methods', 'good enough data'. The reasoning in degrees reverberates everywhere in the line. While what I called political sceptical approaches focus on *the* 'Western standard' being forwarded with the labelling of 'fragile states', they miss the powerful practices and implications of adaptable standards in this niche standardisation. Measuring and managing down to the details of quantified degrees are at the centre of the agenda and, as seen, have particularly powerful impacts.

I conclude with two other important points. One is in the awareness regarding this niche standardisation. In the practices analysed, actors were aware of the limitations of data and methods. As Desrosières says,

> [i]n their everyday practice, statisticians are plunged into a world of conventions, which they record or shape themselves. The fact that the measurement results from this sequencing of conventional decisions is therefore self-evident to them.[129]

As statistics become nested[130] in policy-making, covered by layers of technologies, practical considerations of time and distance, and concerns with objective 'visualisation' and accessibility in a digital world, statisticians do not ignore the limits and problems of numbers; they incorporate these realisations in the form of quantified errors and numbers that are knowingly temporary. Therefore, critiques that aim at the inaccuracy of data, beyond the obvious importance of pointing at perhaps accidentally mistaken numbers, very much miss the target. Errors are part of the game.

The second point is in that taking this self-awareness into account does not mean to reduce the role of power in these practices. On the contrary; as will be discussed, the powerful impacts of the re-standardisation achieved through quantification and classification are made evident everywhere. After all, 'fit-for-purpose' is never fit for one purpose – not collected, nor used for one purpose only. Just as the 'average man' travelled, so do many indicators on 'state fragility'. Common senses become common out of practicality.

[129] Desrosières 2009, p. 320.
[130] A term I borrow from Lampland and Star, who intended exactly to express how these many elements 'fit into one another, somewhat like a set of Russian dolls (maitruska).' See Lampland and Star 2009, p. 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPERTISE AND OBJECTIVITY:

THE TRAPS OF EVER-PERFECTIBLE SKILLS

Many scholars are familiar with Orwell's story reproduced in Scott's book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*: A British colonial officer is egged by natives to shoot a rogue elephant, but he does not want to; he feels guilty and would rather not kill the animal. However, not willing to be seen as either indecisive or coward, he is trapped into the expectations generated by his own dominant image. Scott concludes: 'If subordination requires a credible performance of humility and deference, so domination seems to require a credible performance of haughtiness and mastery'.[1] One's image, be it powerful or powerless, is both fortunately and unfortunately attached to its own set of related expectations. Comparing his fieldwork observations of Kabile rituals in the Algeria of the 50s and 60s with the bureaucratic institutionalisation of 'modern' practices of power, Bourdieu adds a crucial element to this 'credible performance', the gentler power of bureaucratic practices. In this sense, in the 'fragile states' agenda, the powerful practices

[1] Scott 1990, p. 11.

of quantification and classification can make the trap of expectations regarding the 'most powerful' more subtle but not less important. Practices considered technical are not free from expectations; in fact, they are surrounded by threats of obsolescence.

'A man possesses in order to give. But he also possesses by giving'.[2] Technical skills are valued when they are useful, but 'utility' is self-authenticating in a style of thinking & doing that relies on ever-perfectible methods and objects. In the 'fragile states' agenda, the value of bureaucrats and their work is not in accumulating numbers but in producing and providing useful ones. In this context, it is true that the *unmet* technical demand to produce up-to-date data further exacerbates the perception that 'fragile states' are 'fragile', but also important and central to this chapter is the fact that this technical demand creates crucial pressures on donors' offices as well. Significantly, bureaucrats can become dependent on their ability to provide data that *is* consumed.

Based on these ideas, this chapter develops three streams of analysis: First, I look at the perceived 'incapacity' in 'fragile states' offices, specifically in Timor-Leste. Next, I transit from this image of 'incapacity' to how expertise is brought to fill the blanks in the g7+'s offices. Finally, I look at what this exportation of expertise means for exporters themselves. I argue these dynamics are all intrinsically connected, and together they point to the particular conception and impacts of this quantifying and classifying reasoning. The goal is indeed not in making broad statements about statistical reasoning; instead, I suggest that the quantifying expertise analysed here is played in a very specific way in the 'fragile states' agenda.

Along these streams of analysis, I offer three broad arguments. I suggest that quantification and classification form a particularly fluid form of expertise, less dependent on institutions as 'nexus of exchange' to be circulated.[3] Moreover, as an expertise that therefore carries its own 'universal' authority, I argue that in the highly political 'fragile states' agenda, numbers tend to be practically used as gatekeepers, somehow guaranteeing that actors can also circulate. This argument is inspired by Porter's view on the mix of 'inside' and 'outside' (in terms of scientific

[2] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 126.
[3] Dezalay and Garth 2002, p. 166.

community) in certain disciplines.[4] He suggests that where science and politics can easily be mixed, 'mechanical objectivity' tends to become prominent, answering to pressures for 'impersonality'. This brings me to my third and intrinsically connected point. Borrowing from Dezalay's and Garth's understanding of an import-export market of expertise,[5] I suggest two peculiar phenomena take place in the 'fragile states': Exporters, led by the practical pressure to increase utility for their own expertise, work *from within* donor agencies attending to the requests of 'fragile states' for data and statistical analyses *or* are *often exported themselves* to work as 'outsourced staff'. Their work needs to be both clearly effective in terms of the expertise imported, and absolutely impartial in their technical character.

These suggestions indicate that by constructing 'fragile states', professionals in donor agencies create the very bar, that is, the very standards of what an expert on 'fragile states' is, and these standards then can also be measured, managed and compared. In fact, these experts have come to occupy the central tiers of the game, playing as 'double agents':[6] They export crucial and highly technical expertise to the offices of 'fragile states', but also significantly rely on this expertise being useful, thus necessarily engaging in assisting the importation and somewhat attending to the needs in these offices.

Hence, quantification and classification *are* practices of power, but they also introduce important caveats and nuances to these practices: The more professionals find, they more they are compelled to find, in a routine of ever-perfectibility of data, methods and results. The technologies and methods that accompany current 'haughtiness and mastery' encase their very own political traps.

1. 'THESE PEOPLE ARE *REALLY* POOR': TIMOR-LESTE AND THE CHALLENGE OF CAPACITY

In this section, I discuss the unbalanced presence of skills and expertise in the agenda by highlighting the challenges the Timorese government faced in the years that led to the g7+ foundation. The perceived 'lack of capacity'

[4] Porter 1995, p. 229.
[5] Dezalay and Garth 2002, 2011.
[6] Ibid, Ibid.

in the country is essential to discuss, subsequently, how expertise is negotiated to fill in *and* to actually create niches of '(in)capacity'.

1.1. DATA AND EXPERTISE: FILLING IN THE BLANKS IN A COUNTRY LEFT TO SCORCH

One of the earliest available reports on the physical and human conditions in Timor-Leste soon after independence, in 1999, was produced by a joint assessment mission led by the World Bank. It detailed the destruction of infra-structure and the lack of skilled staff as major concerns. I here reproduce two of the most shocking descriptions:

> Buildings and equipment in the small modern sector have been decimated. The physical infrastructure and equipment in every bank has been destroyed or looted, and there is currently no payments system in operation enabling public or private entities to pay salaries or goods and services…Even more importantly, there is a drastic shortage of skilled personnel for the secondary and tertiary sectors: most technical positions were occupied by Indonesians who have left the country.[7]

> The civil service is not currently functioning at any level in East Timor. Over 70% of administrative buildings have been partially or completely destroyed, and almost all office equipment and consumable materials have been destroyed. Government archives have been destroyed or removed. Accurate figures are not available on the number of civil servants remaining in the territory, but at least 20-25% – those estimated to be of Indonesian origin – are likely to have left. Indonesian civil servants were concentrated in the higher grades and skilled technical positions, so this creates a serious skill deficit for the civil service.[8]

The overall impression seems to have been of a country beyond usual 'state fragility'. Paul Collier cites in his book *The Bottom Billion* a conversation he had with a peacekeeper from Gambia – itself, in his words, 'one of the smallest and poorest countries in Africa': 'When I asked him about the situation in East Timor, he told me that it was terrible. "These people are *really* poor," he said.' Collier concluded: 'If he thought so, they were.'[9] Staff used to poverty and conflict say they were shocked by the lack of material and human capital, even as far as in 2004, two years after the transition period led by UNTAET:

[7] World Bank 1999, p. 3.
[8] Ibid., p. 4.
[9] Collier 2007, p. 127. Emphasis in original.

> There wasn't anybody who could do a macroeconomic framework. Nobody. No one could take the basic macroeconomic variables and project economic growth, taking into consideration budgets etc There was no single macroeconomist. There was one lawyer, Brazilian or Portuguese, writing all laws for the country. There was no single qualified judge.[10]

This was thoroughly acknowledged by Timorese officers themselves. Even with certain budget available, it is said to have been for many years greatly difficult to actually implement the budget, due to a lack of skilled officers in planning and execution projects and owing to the fact that statistics necessary to know the sectors in which implementation would take place simply did not exist. In 2007, just after taking office in the Ministry of Finance, Minister Emília Pires wrote, together with World Bank advisor Michael Francino:

> Planning is meant to augment the budget process, but owing to the degree of complexity and the weak capacity skills of staff involved, best use has yet to be made of systems in place…To cite one example, in an effort to eradicate illiteracy, the decision was made to prioritize education in the budget. That translated into allocating more money to the sector, but no discussions took place on how that money should be spent. There was no analysis of how many people were actually illiterate, or what their age ranges were, or how many children were attending school, or whether those outside school were not attending.[11]

The difficulty in producing necessary data and the lack of skills in making use of whatever data existed were intermingled in the perceived overall lack of technical capacity in the country. The Timorese were not used to occupying high positions, as these had always been the privilege of Indonesians.

> Very suddenly [after independence], junior staff became senior, but they had spent their whole life under Indonesian rule hearing 'you cannot spend money, you cannot take responsibility'. They were not used to disbursing money and they didn't know how to.[12]

After all, spending money in the budget is also skilled work, even more so when government officials are accountable to donors. In these circumstances, disbursement needs to be followed by proper forms, reports, tables, graphs and technical language.

[10] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[11] Pires and Francino 2007, p. 140.
[12] Interview with Leigh Mitchell.

> I had been living and working in Indonesia, after studying there. When the transition was to end, I applied for a job in the government in Timor. First I worked in the Budget Office, and we prepared the annual budget and mid-budget update. I became a focal point for the Ministry of Agriculture. But there were many difficulties: I didn't know what I had to do. Our manager was from Australia. We all went together to the Ministry of Agriculture with an advisor to take a look and I was then beginning to learn. In the Budget Office, there were three advisors from Australia, four from Portugal and eleven nationals. What we need… We have to know the budget law, the calendar [of government activities], how to deal with people, we have to know the system and software. For example, we started using the Free Balance software for budget, so we received training from the software company.[13]

Pires and Francino point at the general fear new Timorese officers felt of disbursing money as a key obstacle for the government; they say the refrain in the Ministry of Finance was 'Careful, careful… Let's not make mistakes. Otherwise, the donors won't give us any more aid.'[14] However, this was also the Ministry facing the highest expectations among those assisted by donor agencies, including the World Bank.[15] The Timorese fiscal management system was said to be 'world class', 'designed largely by Bretton Woods institutions' with 'extensive monitoring and control mechanisms' and thus requiring 'a pool of highly skilled personnel to operate it.'[16] Indeed, the Ministry of Finance as a whole seems the perfect illustration of the lack of capacity both donors' and Timorese officers identified at the time. It is important to understand how these lacunae were faced, as this indicates both the power of the quantifying and classifying reasoning explored so far and how its related expertise and skills are moved between actors, hence, what kind of relations this reasoning incentivises. I select two examples I believe detail well these dynamics.

1.2. HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS: THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

The first example is in the difficulties the Timorese Ministry of Finance faced to produce macroeconomic analyses in the first years after the UN left the country, from 2005 onwards. The first household survey, central in

[13] Interview with Epifânio Martins.
[14] Pires and Francino 2007, p. 146.
[15] In the case of the work of the World Bank in Timor-Leste, the report by the Joint Assessment Mission, for instance, states that more than a third of the assistance budget was allocated to Infra-Structure and Economic Recovery. See World Bank 1999, Annex 1.
[16] Ibid., p. 147.

producing basic national data, was only finally concluded in 2011.[17] This kind of survey is essential for the planning of development policies and, thus, considered a key dataset both for government and donor agencies. It is said, for instance, that information on the wealth of a country and administrative data on unemployment benefits can come from national accounts, but only household surveys can offer detailed information on poverty and unemployment. By definition, because it collects information directly from households, this type of survey is better equipped to discount the 'state effectiveness' variable that could intervene in the very possibility of unemployed people registering for benefits, for example.[18]

> Governments design policies for specific purposes…[b]ut policy goals are reached not simply because the government wills them to be so, but through the interaction of the programs and household or individual behavior.[19]

It is not surprising, thus, that the UN Statistics Division has declared household surveys 'one of the most important mechanisms for collecting information on populations in developing and transition countries,'[20] and both the UN and PARIS21 have declared household surveys key forms of monitoring the progress towards the MDGs.[21]

Therefore, Timor-Leste's first household survey, almost fully produced by national offices, was highly valued by the Minister of Finance herself. The foreword of the publication, by Minister Emília Pires, praises the exercise as completely designed and conducted by the National Statistics Directorate, with 'incidental' help from the European Union.[22] Nevertheless, it seems the survey was not seen as good enough by the Timorese government at the time. An interviewee mentioned the not-so-welcome reaction of the government,[23] and it does seem the case that some in the government thought there was considerable room for improvement. The fact is that in the same year, the World Bank was contacted to provide training on a new software, ADePT, developed by the

[17] See glossary in Annex 8.
[18] For more examples and a discussion, see Muñoz and Scott [ ].
[19] Ibid., p. 7.
[20] United Nations 2005, p. 4. My emphasis.
[21] Muñoz and Scott [ ]; United Nations 2005
[22] Timor-Leste Government 2011b, Foreword.
[23] Anonymised information.

Bank itself and capable of generating statistical analyses with '*no need' of much skilled human work*.[24]

> The free software is especially valuable for analysts in developing countries, where expensive statistical software tools and training are often hard to come by. With *built-in* modern statistical technology and a *user-friendly* interface, ADePT empowers policy practitioners – *including those with limited programming skills* – to conduct sophisticated economic analysis…The World Bank, which already offers its data free to the world, is focusing on *sharing* its expert knowledge as well.[25]

'Sharing' being *to export*, this is a rich example of how the quantifying expertise circulates. Moreover, it already indicates the peculiarity of this circulation in the 'fragile states' agenda: Based on the 'universal' language of statistics, this expertise is more automatically imported by the offices of 'fragile states', with reduced costs of 'translation', that is, the need to 'reinterpret learned practices' to the local audience.[26] However, its exportation by producers requires a constant struggle among these to increase expertise and being able to produce what can be *useful*, that is, what can be adapted to different contexts.

By automating the process of data analysis, analytical outputs can be easily and cheaply produced, requiring less time, fewer resources and skills; thus, the software is supposed to be a perfect product for 'fragile states'.[27] ADePT is the main tool suggested by the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) for implementing surveys and analysing results. The IHSN is an international network whose stated mission is to 'improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of survey data within developing countries, and to encourage the analysis and use of this data.'[28] Among its partners and sponsors are the World Bank and OECD via PARIS21.[29] In 2005, the UN had produced a report that stated the importance of making household survey a matter of *constant* monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instead of *ad hoc* initiatives.[30] In that sense, the IHSN could mean that M&E applied to 'fragile states' are indeed *constantly* conducted and, most importantly, made available internationally for any stakeholder. Moreover,

[24] World Bank, 'ADePT'. See also World Bank, 'ADePT seminars'.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Dezalay and Garth 2011, p. 80.
[27] World Bank, 'ADePT. Software for Automated Economic Analysis'.
[28] International Household Surveys Network (IHSN), 'Mission and Objectives'.
[29] PARIS21's offices are located in the OECD.
[30] United Nations 2005, p. 4. My emphasis.

what is involved in this initiative is constant 'collaboration' and 'technical assistance'.[31]

It is perhaps pointless to search for the specific reasons that led government officials to decide the first Timorese household survey was not good enough and that the use of ADePT was necessary to improve data production and analysis; the point I want to highlight instead is that the technical skills perceived as necessary for the implementation of the surveys were lacking in Timor-Leste *and* were acquired through – or rather substituted by – training in the use of a specific software, a software that does the analysis *for* the analyst. Of greater significance still is the fact that this software is somehow part of a larger network that seeks to make household surveys – key in the formulation and implementation of development policies – ongoing exercises of M&E, available internationally for free use by any actors. These dynamics are crucial to discuss power in the next chapter, but here they first tell of the nuances in the game. Below, I add the second illustration to this argument.

1.3. FOLLOWING DONORS' PROJECTS, CHECKING FOR PRIORITIES

There is another example I find eloquent in showing how the lack of skills and expertise can be 'accommodated' in 'fragile states'. I depart from a perhaps ironic point: In Timor-Leste, until 2010, the government had no central database regarding the investments and projects of donors in the country. It is said that the overall feeling among government officials was that the donors were not following the *National Priorities*, established in 2007 and pre-dating the *Strategic Development Plan*, finalised only in 2010.[32] However, the government had no means to confirm this impression. The system used to monitor the donor activities in the country was based on the use of Microsoft Access, but it is said no national counterparts were properly trained in the use of the system before the 2006 crisis. When the overseas advisors left amid the chaos of the crisis, 'the system was left in disrepair'.[33] An Australian advisor who worked inside the Ministry of

[31] Ibid., p. 5.
[32] Timor Leste 2011.
[33] Interview with Leigh Mitchell.

Finance, contracted by the World Bank, says of the time when he arrived, in 2007:

> *I* can't even know how to use Microsoft Access, so I had no idea of what to do with it. Then the Japan Development Cooperation Agency funded a guy to work on an Excel sheet to catch the long-term projects going on. But it was an Excel spreadsheet! Every quarter, every six month, the email would go and ask every donor to submit data on their projects and he would then compare in this sheet with hundreds of pages. It was not accurate, and relatively unhelpful. We had an idea of what development partners were doing, but we had the data in a way that was too difficult to extract meaningful information. We were relying on development partners attending meetings of the National Priorities working group to discuss the projects, to get a better sense of what the donors were doing. Now we have the Transparency Portal. It took a few years to get it done. We looked at a huge number of options, Cambodia, Vietnam… In the end we went with the Development Gateway [software], which is more expensive, but more flexible and tailored. It can deliver modules that target fragile states, the Paris Declaration, the New Deal and other processes. It is much simpler to use, far more so than the Excel spreadsheet. Before, the ministries didn't even look at the numbers, because it's not something they vote on anyway. Now, the ministries don't need to go through all this process, they can just click on a button and the report is generated.[34]

The story is an example of the unbalanced skills and expertise in the 'fragile states' agenda. In many circumstances such as the described above, the data needed might require one person, one software, one annual report, but these might be just the things that the government ministries' cannot afford to offer due to some lack of technical capacity. Even advisors struggle to cope with new techniques of data production and analysis. At the same time, this information is crucial. Therefore, the role of 'importers', contrary to the approach political sceptics often take, needs to be explored in terms of what the lack of this quantifying expertise might represent: In this case, not importing the expertise would mean not being able to follow the very projects developed by donors in the country – one important layer of nuances to be considered.

Therefore, not only might the lack of data hinder government policies, but it might as well make it impossible for the government to know if donors are following national priorities. In this case, again, the end point of the technical capacity-building was an international platform, the Development Gateway. The solution found by the government was in

[34] Ibid.

following international standards of aid management that had been 'tested' in several 'fragile states'.

The Development Gateway, a non-profit organisation, works in 20 countries, mostly those considered 'fragile states' by donors.[35] Among the Development Gateway's financial partners is the World Bank, and among its technical partners is the OECD.[36]

> We host global information platforms that provide access to critical development knowledge, data and resources. We implement aid information management systems that allow governments to make more informed decisions…we provide training, workshops, and process analysis to strengthen our partners' capacity to manage their own information.[37]

Again, the lack of skills and expertise in Timor-Leste led the government to seek international platforms that provide software to automatise data analysis and make data available in a global scale. The implementation involves the assessment of capacities and skills in the government, training and capacity-building, and the development of templates for periodic reports and routine practices of data collection and analysis. The institutionalisation itself requires also extending the software to line ministries, offering technical support and training. [38] Most importantly, these steps and the program as a whole are said to be especially interesting for 'fragile states' because they already incorporate the measuring of progress regarding the goals proposed by key documents in the agenda. These would include the principles on 'ownership', 'mutual accountability', 'alignment' and 'harmonisation' of aid, and the effective introduction of '*management for results*', with 'result-oriented reporting and target monitoring tools'.[39] In the whole process, thus, a 'fragile state'' capacity is measured, the measures are made available in international platforms, and these measures are used to tailor solutions for each case of 'fragility'. The central point is that neither 'fragile states' offices can do without this expertise, nor can experts succeed without making themselves useful in such offices.

[35] Development Gateway, 'Where we work'.
[36] Development Gateway, 'Partners'.
[37] Development Gateway, 'About us'.
[38] Development Gateway, 'Implementation Approach'.
[39] Ibid.

The technical moves in these examples are crucial to understanding the practical pressures over 'fragile states'' officers to import expertise and, thus, the quantifying and classifying reasoning itself.

When 'fragile states'' officers require and accept to import expertise, including those that actually involve automatising crucial analyses in which decision-making is based, practical pressures need to be taken into account. There was in the respective cases discussed here, for example, a need to acquire this expertise precisely to be able to measure the needs of the population and to follow projects being implemented by donors. However, importing this expertise implies reinforcing the quantifying and classifying reasoning imbued in it, making it possible for databases to be created that will be used internationally and for international platforms to be generated allowing for on-going monitoring and comparison.

Nevertheless, the role of 'users' in the case of this specific expertise places staff in 'fragile states' in a position to request but also somehow challenge donors' staff to provide the sort of useful expertise they themselves so eloquently advocate as essential for development to take place. Moreover, these experts are expected to do so quietly and almost invisibly.

2. REMOTE AND OUTSOURCED DONOR ASSISTANCE: 'WE ARE BEHIND THE SCENES'

As ever-perfectibility and, therefore, adaptation and flexibility become part of the practical sense in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', methods and objects, that is, the very expectations and results linked to 'state fragility', need to be constantly re-worked and re-shaped.

Adapting methods and expectations implies changing routines of practices, techniques, technologies, structures and even institutions. The g7+'s Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs), TRUST and FOCUS would be the group's form of attempting to establish the parameters of how this flexibility or re-standardisation of methods and expectations are to take place. However, these propositions require investments, financial and

human – working groups need money and logistical support to get together to develop indicators; the g7+'s office in Dili needs more staff, up-to-date reports, know-how in organising international conferences and holding diplomatic multilateral and bilateral meetings as part of the UN General Assembly; focal points need technical assistance and political leverage to implement the Fragility Assessments in their ministries; and so on.

Nonetheless, as part of the group's demands for more ownership, this external assistance is carefully implemented; advisors and contact points become what I call *remote or outsourced staff*, offering assistance to the g7+, paid by donor agencies but acting 'behind the scenes.'[40]

2.1. WESTERN EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND: THE NEED FOR STAFF

From 2011 to 2014, in the period in which the g7+ can be said to have quickly conquered some international ground, there were several challenges and obstacles to the group's agenda, both in terms of content and regarding the means available for circulating this agenda. Crucially, it has been considerably difficult for g7+'s members to conduct the exercises necessary to develop the Fragility Assessment indicators, as the skilled logistics of the exercise make technical assistance a common requirement. It is not perhaps surprising then, that even amid the claims for more ownership the g7+ is closely tied to donor representatives in most of the steps its members take.

The g7+ secretariat was established in Dili, in 2010/11, amid the severe capacity constraints discussed in the previous section. It achieved eight members of staff in 2013, two of them seconded by the World Bank and the UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI); another is a national from Australia.[41]

> Because Timor had kick-started the group, our role in the NDAE [National Directorate for Aid Effectiveness] expanded quickly, with donor and government coordination of specific development goals. It became the local secretariat for Timor's engagement with the g7+ and some of the OECD processes. We also then became the official secretariat for the g7+. It is like in 24h our role tripled in size.[42]

[40] Interview with Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu.
[41] g7+, 'August 2013 Newsletter - Meet the secretariat'.
[42] Interview with Leigh Mitchell.

The Timorese NDAE, in the Ministry of Finance, came about as a result of the increasing perception that it was necessary to monitor donor assistance and to confirm that donor practices followed the then newly established national priorities. The previous section illustrated some of the obstacles the department and the Ministry of Finance as a whole faced in terms of skills and technical challenges. Nevertheless, and in fact perhaps not surprisingly, this Ministry was to become the core of the g7+'s secretariat. Accordingly, the demands increased even more and technical assistance quickly poured in.

The World Bank has employed a focal point in Kenya to work for the g7+; the OECD-INCAF had employed another one in Paris, coordinating the IDPS and supposedly working for both donors and the g7+, and this has now moved to be a focal point from Liberia. In addition, the ODI has a line of research, the Budget Strengthening Initiative, said to be providing reports and studies as requested by the g7+. The support is characterised as a kind of 'pro-bono think tank assistance' based on technical/knowledge support.[43] All these cases of technical assistance are paid for by donor agencies, not hired by the g7+ *per se*, although there seems to be at least an element of direct choice involved in some of these contracts. Betty Maina, the former World Bank focal point for the g7+ in Kenya, for example, was a personal request of the secretariat.

> It seems the technical assistance in general was not trusted, but they trusted me. I had worked in Somalia in 2003, in the final peace discussions and the elaboration of the first constitution. I had worked for associations in Kenya. I guess it was good that I am African.[44]

At the basic level, these were contracts necessary to increase the number of staff working for the g7+. At the beginning, the staff in the secretariat were also part of the Timorese Ministry of Finance itself, thus, they had other work to attend to and were not exclusive of the g7+. Focal points in other member countries also have their own work in their ministries, hence, they struggle to find time to dedicate to the g7+ activities.

> Most of the focal points in the g7+ have full time jobs! They can't do everything.[45]

[43] Interview with Claire Leigh.
[44] Interview with Betty Maina.
[45] Interview with Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu.

This has slightly changed, at least at the secretariat itself, as the group grew in its ability to sit at international tables. Helder da Costa, a Timorese with a PhD in Trade Policy from the University of Adelaide, South Australia, slowly firmed his position as the General Secretary of the g7+, although he is still also a Ministry adviser for aid effectiveness; and Habib Ur Rehman Mayar was seconded from the Afghan Ministry of Finance to work as Senior Policy Specialist. Felícia Carvalho, a Timorese who also studied in Australia and has a background on Public Health, is one of the few who have worked with the g7+ since 2010, and in the secretariat she provides most of the logistical support the group requires for meetings and communication. Their Western background and education are considered critical by themselves in the work they perform. Minister Emília Pires herself was raised in Australia; she has a BA in Statistics by the University of Latrobe in Melbourne, and a MA in Science in Development Management from the London School of Economics.

> When you are sitting there [at international tables], you see how they see you. I think the donors needed someone to tell them how recipients were seeing them too. I did both roles. Also, I came from a developed country. I was brought up in Australia for 25 years, so my education is a Western kind of education. I never lost my roots though. So yes, I was able to articulate some problems in a language donors would understand and on the other way as well. I translated what donors said to a language that recipients could understand too. I don't mean French, English…but a comprehension of words and policies.[46]

This 'Western education' and overall background experience in working with donor institutions seem indeed crucial for double agents in the offices of 'fragile states'. As mentioned before, Minister Emília Pires had worked with the World Bank in the early years of Timor-Leste independence. Siafa Hage, the new g7+ focal point for the International Dialogue, is a Liberian citizen with a BA and a MA from the University of Michigan.[47] The new chair of the g7+, Sierra Leone's Finance Minister Kaifala Marah, has a MA from the State University of New York and a PhD from the University of Hull, UK.[48] In the context of the g7+, there are, however, only a few who have this kind of 'Western education'. Therefore, secondments are frequent.

[46] Interview with Emília Pires.
[47] From Linkedin profile.
[48] Newstime Africa 7 Dec 2013.

In 2011, a policy analyst was seconded from ODI, and in 2013, the World Bank seconded another analyst, both to become Programme Officers in the g7+ secretariat.[49] As of 2014, ODI is selecting one more person to be seconded to the g7+.[50] Considering all of the secretariat's work is paid for by the Timorese government,[51] these outsourced professionals seem to be generally welcome. These are expensive advisors that would be paid out of the Timorese budget otherwise or not hired at all.

The conditions of these secondments or outsourcing are perhaps unique. They are not simply advisors but 'dislocated' ones, as they are officially subordinated to the secretariat, although still accountable to donors.[52] It would be fruitless to attempt to deduce how much of their 'loyalty' lies with whom, since, to say the least, they all come from different countries, organisations and backgrounds and have diverse job descriptions. Therefore, while the discussion around staff may be seen as basically pertaining to the size of the g7+ team or may lead to an endless quasi-psychological search for loyalties, I instead look at how it crucially involves the 'loan' to the g7+ of important sets of skills.

2.2. EXPORTING EXPORTERS

These skills are loaned because they are perceived as needed, and they are developed because they are seen as useful in the practical sense at play. The way these perceptions or expectations are developed and reproduced is crucial to understanding how practices become largely adopted and, thus, authenticated, taking with them the very object of 'state fragility'.

Crucially, I argue the 'double game' played by these 'double agents'/experts is of a peculiar type precisely because rooted in statistical reasoning. Indeed, one of Porter's great contribution to understanding the particular authority attributed to quantification is in highlighting that this authority is based on the opposite of what elites and politicians make use

[49] g7+, 'August 2013 Newsletter - Meet the secretariat'.
[50] Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 2014.
[51] Interview with Felicia Carvalho.
[52] Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 2014. See 'Management and Reporting'.

of; quantification tends to discredit judgment and discretion.[53] Not that this battle is ever definitely won, but the external regulations around quantifying practices are certainly a constant push towards the prevalence of an 'objective' image. In that sense, quantification is also the arm to be used in realms where trust is lacking: 'Mechanical objectivity', or rather the image of it, 'serves as an alternative to personal trust.'"[54] I suggest this creates a special condition in the highly quantified 'fragile states' agenda, whereby, beyond the double game Dezalay and Garth depict, 'exporters' are either remotely or *de facto* exported themselves into 'importers'' systems, loaned in their expertise exactly because this expertise can be allegedly *trusted* to be impersonal. It is important to analyse how expertise and skills invite such nuances in the 'fragile states' agenda.

2.3. THE G7+'S COUNTRY-SPECIFIC INDICATORS: WHAT YOU CAN DO IS WHAT YOU ARE

Apart from financial and staff support, the focal points paid by donors and working for the g7+, remotely or not, bring essential skills. Of utmost relevance so far, these outsourced staff have been providing support for one essential activity of the g7+'s agenda, the formulation and implementation of the Fragility Assessment and the accompanying development of the PSGs.

Betty Maina, who was hired by the World Bank as a g7+ focal point in Kenya, was in charge of offering technical assistance in the steps towards developing the Fragility Assessments:

> Part of my work involved helping with the Fragility Assessments and to develop the indicators to help track the progress against the targets of the assessment. In total, we were, I think, five helping work on the guidelines to develop the Fragility Assessments and to help them [g7+ members] to interpret what it represented for them. We provided workshops with ODI, for example. We put everything together in reports.[55]

The information available on these steps is scarce, not least because even staff members involved do not have an overview of the

[53] Porter 1995, p. 98.
[54] Ibid., p. 90.
[55] Interview with Betty Maina.

process, since there is still no central knowledge base, for example, or an official means to account for all activities and procedures related to the work of the g7+.[56] The main document detailing the process of developing the g7+'s 'fragility' indicators was produced in 2013, based on the results of a meeting in DRC. The *Note on the Fragility Spectrum* explains how the g7+'s members developed their country-specific indicators. It constantly emphasises the need to carefully avoid using the 'menu of indicators' as templates or prescriptions. One can say the process is composed of two main general steps: understanding where the country is, that is, which specific situations it faces, and finding the indicators that correspond to these situations, in terms of measuring both what is happening in the present and how much improvement can and should be expected to achieve the specific target set by the country.

Crucially, the stages in the spectrum (crisis, rebuild/reform, transition, transformation, resilience) are not pre-defined: Each g7+ member defines their own understanding of each stage and, accordingly, positions the country in the spectrum. By defining stage 1 and stage 5, for instance, the idea is that not only each member sets its own targets but it acknowledges its own point of departure, thus its Fragility Assessment would evaluate relative performance rather than absolute achievements.

The *Note on the Fragility Spectrum* is said to offer a 'consolidated fragility spectrum' based on the experiences of the five pilot countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, DRC and Timor-Leste).[57] It offers a 'menu of indicators' that gathers the indicators proposed by these members; however, the menu is said to offer 'inspiration' rather than prescription, which is also how it is proposed to be used for the definitions of the stages themselves. Focal points in member countries are to receive an empty template to fill in at the beginning of the exercise:

[56] The g7+ produces a newsletter every two months.
[57] Ibid., p. 1.

	Stage 1: Crisis	Stage 2: Rebuild and Re-form	Stage 3: Transition	Stage 4: Transfor-mation	Stage 5: Resilience	Indica-tors to measure progress
PSG 1: Inclusive politics	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country indicators
PSG 2: Security	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country indicators
PSG 3: Justice	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country indicators
PSG 4: Economic Foundations	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country indicators
PSG 5: Revenues & Services	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country description	Country indicators

FIGURE 9: G7+'S COUNTRY-SPECIFIC FRAGILITY SPECTRUM[58]

The document states that the template '[a]ims to track incremental progress, and to assist countries in the development of their own targets and goals…instead of merely judging progress from an ideal end-state'.[59] Moreover, the idea is that the Fragility Spectrum and Assessment would 'ensure that the indicators identified are not only country specific, but are also chosen with a particular stage in the fragility spectrum in mind.'[60] Therefore, the exercise does seem to make it possible to increase focus on performance as opposed to the usual default privileging of outcomes, as chapter three highlighted in the case of the World Bank's CPIA, for instance. The focus, as discussed, is on the 'next stage of development', rather than on development itself.

The document suggests that g7+ members can use the 300 indicators-long list produced after the five pilot studies to select those indicators which fit their own self-identified stage of 'fragility' or develop their own indicators, variously focusing on inputs, capacity or outcome indicators, for example, according to the stage identified.[61] It is argued this would help to manage donors' expectations and lead to an understanding of '*realistic* progress'.[62]

It is important to analyse the technical steps taken to construct these country-specific indicators. A statement by a key donor representative siting in the New Deal Working Group on Indicators is eloquent:[63]

[58] Ibid., p. 4.
[59] Ibid., p. 3.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p. 6. See part of the long list of indicators in Annex 6.
[62] Ibid. My emphasis.
[63] See Annex 5 on the working groups.

> Not all INCAF members are taking their tasks in the [Fragility Assessment] pilots seriously and many don't seem aware of their commitments. I was told one [donor] representative answered, when asked what their role was in the pilot, that his/her work was only 'symbolic'.[64]

The statement was part of this officer's presentation to the OECD-INCAF high-level ministerial meeting in June 2013 as a representative of a donor agency. (S)he is also a member of the Working Group on Indicators. The tone was of indignation: The reported answer by a fellow donor representative who 'should' be helping a g7+ member in conducting its Fragility Assessment was perceived as disrespectful towards the commitment donors made to the process. Precisely this 'commitment' is central here: OECD-INCAF representatives who are allocated seats in the various subgroups working on the implementation of the *New Deal* are supposed to offer technical assistance and follow the exercise from a close distance, being *visibly efficient* but also *'objective'* experts inside countries' systems – exported exporters. Their role is meant to lack subjective discretion, but *not* to be 'symbolic' – on the contrary, they are supposed to be useful.

2.4. DIAGNOSING AND MAKING 'INCAPACITY'

As of 2013, the Working Group on Indicators was supporting the pilots of the Fragility Assessment by compiling all indicators in a long list,[65] which was then 'narrowed down and refined…by identifying commonalities among countries, considering their relevance, coherence as a group, measurability and the availability of data.'[66] These supporting activities are of high relevance; they involve the judgment of feasibility of data and the purpose of the exercise as part of the g7+'s agenda. Moreover, by making these judgements through practice, these activities in fact contribute to delimit and mould the kind of indicators adopted in the Fragility Assessment. In intense self-authentication, the judgment of what g7+ members' statistical offices *can* collect and analyse helps determining what they *will* analyse. Therefore, the measured capacity helps to define and construct 'state

[64] My transcript from the June 2013 INCAF high-level ministerial meeting. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules.
[65] See Annex 6 for part of this list.
[66] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) 19 April 2013, p. 3.

fragility' as political truths. What 'fragile states' *can* measure becomes what 'fragile states' *should* measure, and what *is* measured becomes part of the quantified definition of what 'state fragility' is. Moreover, this composition is very much mediated by exported experts working from within.

Paradoxically, this determination of what *can* be done somehow answers to the very demand by the g7+ that indicators correspond to national statistical capacity, so that harmful, useless or hard to collect indicators are cut out and national statistical offices are moved into action, reinforcing the use of country systems.[67] The Fragility Assessment is, after all, a claim for contextual and country-specific indicators that *can* be measured by country-systems, that is, a claim for indicators whose availability and utility are made 'realistic' for each g7+ member. These are practices, methods and objects made 'good enough', adaptable and ever-perfectible; their contextual character builds authenticity amid an agenda full of 'degrees', 'stages', and not least, provisional correlations. The implicit idea in the g7+'s propositions is to improve the technical performance of national institutions by starting at a lower level and slowly building up capacity. Skills and 'state fragility' would drag each other slowly upwards, to the next stage in development. The limitations applied by the practical sense around '*can*' are, therefore, as defining of 'fragile states' as 'countries low in capacity' as it may contribute to move capacity beyond the initial limits.

Nevertheless, it is also important to notice that in the work to increase ownership through incremental expansion of national statistical capacity, donor technical assistance in the form of exported or loaned experts has been fundamental in providing the tools, methods and practical know-how for quantification and classification – and not least, in diagnosing *and* making the very contours of 'fragile states'' capacity. In this context, pressures and demands have also mounted among professionals in donor agencies; they have become trapped in a style of thinking & doing that promises ever-perfectibility. Their role cannot be symbolic, but their effectiveness needs to play out only in the 'objective' terms of quantification and classification. For that, their expertise expands towards all-

[67] It is also true that members of the g7+ should, at least in theory, be active parts in the working group on indicators, co-chaired, for instance, by DRC.

encompassing skills, becoming a burden to which their efficiency practically and constantly contributes.

3. THEIR DEVELOPMENT IS YOUR DEVELOPMENT: WHAT EXPERTS ARE EXPECTED TO KNOW ABOUT 'FRAGILE STATES'

In his book *Beloved Land*, George Peake, a former 'development worker' who spent four years in Timor-Leste, tells of the sense of impotence bureaucrats often trapped themselves into and how much this was due to their own methods of investigation and intervention:

> Flush with cash from oil and gas reserves, Timor-Leste no longer feels beholden to either the United Nations or to donor organisations for very much. Members of the government either cancel meetings at short notice or keep senior aid bureaucrats waiting for hours before they deign to see them – yet such powerful signs of lack of interest in their endeavours are not reported back to headquarters…'Why don't you report this petulance back to New York?', I asked casually, adopting the city-based shorthand of the international bureaucrat. 'I can't do that,' he groaned, as he hoisted himself on his own petard, 'because we've been spinning them good-news stories for the past few months'.[68]

In the narrative of exaggerated success created by bureaucrats then, cases of 'petulance' from Timorese officials could not be included, under the risk of bringing the whole narrative down. Donor staff found themselves trapped in their own good books. I here apply the same irony to the set of skills and interconnected topics increasingly seen as necessary to measure and manage 'fragile states'.

As 'fragile states' are portrayed in donor reports as a maze of conflict and development issues that *can* be measured and managed, it is up to donors' staff to rise to the challenge and develop the methods and solutions that can achieve positive results. Impossibilities and failures are circumvented by steering *adaptability*, the implication of which is that professionals in donor agencies are trapped into ever-perfectible and ever-expandable skills.

My argument does not mean that this somehow dilutes the responsibility of officers in 'fragile states', since, crucially, this is not a game of absolute gains – one's increasing demands are not another's decreasing ones. However, understanding the implications of different sets of skills and

[68] Peake 2013, pp. 2854-2855.

their respective traps contributes to *putting 'weak points' in evidence* instead of hiding them: By assuming that the high level of expertise in donor's offices represents an unmitigated source of superior influence and imposition, a scholar can ironically set aside the very ways in which professionals in donors agencies are constantly held to check, trapped into their very practices and skills.

In the 'fragile states' agenda, ever-perfectible skills indeed create important traps. Development experts can no longer argue their projects were ambushed by a conflict situation, because since recently their reports say that development and conflict should never have been studied and acted upon separately in the first place. These experts can, instead, take courses, training and advice from help-desks on 'fragile states' and read the many 'conflict and fragility' reports produced by the headquarters.

This section argues that the expansion of expertise towards 'conflict and fragility' in the World Bank and OECD has embraced and fed the ever-perfectible character of quantifying and classifying practices, and with that, created important efficiency traps for donor staff.

Perfection is an acknowledged moving target; it is the very imperfection of quantifying and classifying practices that make their associated skills transferable, otherwise each and all such practices would be deemed to achieve a freezing point and close onto themselves. It is the practical sense illustrated in the previous chapter that leads this imperfection to reproduce itself, and with that, the implication for donors' staff is that they are expected to both identify and solve the next quantifiable challenge. Moreover, as the pressure mounts, anticipating the next quantifiable challenge might in fact create the problem, as expected in a self-authenticating style of thinking & doing.

Of numbers, Porter says '[t]hey are intimately bound up with forms of community, and hence also with the social identity of the researcher.'[69] Thus, the supposed objectivity and technicality of quantification and classification practices not only construct the political truth of 'state fragility', but also define what an expert in 'fragile states' is by establishing the practices to be produced and reproduced and the set of skills to be possessed. The notion of 'traps of ever-perfectibility' means to apprehend

[69] Porter 1995, p. 9.

precisely what these practical impositions consist of and how they are played out in the 'fragile states' agenda.

3.1. MANAGING CORRELATIONS, DEGREES AND TURNAROUNDS: PREPARING FOR SURGICAL ASSISTANCE

To look at the traps of ever-perfectible skills, I analyse both what kind of expertise donors' staff have been developing in what regards 'fragile states' and what kind of bureaucratic incentives donors' staff receive to specialise in 'state fragility'. The expertise discussed here points at what 'ever-perfectible skills' mean, that is, how they have been made to constantly expand – in what directions and with which signposts. In addition, the incentives subtly tell of the hesitations managers encountered in recruiting experts for 'fragile states' and how these were overcome, hence, how practical pressures helped to *produce expert staff*.

A key to understand what elements compose this expertise and how this expansion is conceived and managed resides precisely in looking at how expertise can be developed if the target is a moving one. If 'fragile states', as seen in the previous chapters, combine many conflict and development challenges in a dynamic scenario, and if analyses and solutions should be tailored and flexible, how is a body of expertise to be developed at all? In my view, one expression recently adopted by both OECD-INCAF and the World Bank is an eloquent illustration – the notion of *'turnaround' situations*.

As the argument goes, all 'fragile states' can achieve a turnaround situation, as long as the right inputs are provided, in the correct amount and at the precise time when they can be more efficient in producing as much result as expected. The idea of turnaround was born as the 'fragile states' agenda and the quantifying and classifying reasoning merged, amid attempts to understand the many ways conflict and development could correlate, influencing the possibilities of aid effectiveness. In that sense, although seemly too technical a subject, this is actually a central point in the discussion so far. I suggest the notion of 'turnaround' can be seen as *one of the names* given to a general and practical *methodology* adopted by quantifying experts to deal with one specific object of research, 'fragile states' – a methodology that has as central methods quantification and

classification. Here, it serves as *one* way of illustrating the expertise involved in these methods, by looking at a specific way of phrasing the methodology on which these practices are supposed to be based.

ENABLING UPWARD SPIRALS

In 2008, a key OECD document emphasised the need to thoroughly investigate the correlations between development aid and conflict: The *Service Delivery in Fragile Situations* stated the perceived urgency in finding the key to unlock the many correlations between conflict and development so as to prompt '*upwards spirals*'.

> Just as mounting fragility and deteriorating services can be mutually reinforcing tendencies, improving services may enhance social and economic recovery, overcoming fragility in a virtuous *upward spiral*. The influence is reciprocal. But effecting a *turnaround* is no easy matter. The same cluster of influences that created the vicious cycle of fragility will also tend to prevent its reversal.[70]

Significantly, the document points at the importance of mastering the correlations between development and conflict in order to enable positive influences, as opposed to inadvertedly setting them in an even more damaging spiral of 'fragilisation'. It mentions the need to identify and measure opportunities for effective intervention:

> Post-conflict situations present unique opportunities: for *turnaround*, building back better service sectors and using service interventions to build peace, reconciliation and political legitimacy. *Entry points* for long-term reform must be *rapidly identified and exploited*.[71]

The notion of 'turnaround' is interesting; it tells of the methods, skills and expectations that became associated with 'fragile states'. It combines the idea of 'degrees of fragility' – which need to be measured in order to be managed – and the notion of 'good enough', accompanied by its impulse to adapt, flexibilise and tailor. 'Turnaround' can be used to measure how effective aid is in lifting 'fragile states' one degree above their current 'fragility'. Moreover, it implies constant monitoring and evaluation; it advocates *timely and surgically precise intervention*, in the right amount for a controlled effect – the best investment/result ratio. These requirements

[70] OECD 2008b, p. 21. My emphasis.
[71] Ibid., p. 40. My emphasis.

add great pressure to the work of donors' staff, indirectly demanded to know of all factors that make 'fragile states', while also able to measure it on an on-going basis, decide exactly when to act and how.

Again here, the double game of Dezalay and Garth requires fine-tuning for this specific agenda: The 'translation'[72] that importers needs to execute in order to adapt technologies to local audiences very much counts on the exporters themselves anticipating what these adaptations might entail. Ever-perfectible quantification and classification in terms of degrees imply more exact prescriptions or, at least, they constantly create the pressure for such solutions, the perfection never being the target itself.

A rich example of how tailored the 'turnaround' notion is supposed to render interventions is provided by what probably is the earliest and most central work on the topic: Collier and Chauvet looked at 'turnarounds' as something with a start and end point, whereby it stands to be measured and classified what specific kinds of development aid can determine what specific positive changes in policies, institutions and governance, and most importantly, how much of these are correlated.[73] Through regressions and probability, the authors seek to calculate how likely it is that donors can contribute to such turnarounds.[74] Interesting conclusions include the 1.79% probability of 'a sustained turnaround starting in any year', and that the 'mathematical expectation of the duration' of 'state fragility' would be 56 years.[75] However, most important is that the reasoning in the paper is one that seeks to divide to rule: It extricates the various elements of the solutions proposed and quantifies the probable impact of each of them in specific contexts, in order to tailor interventions for different 'degrees of fragility'. Here, quantification, classification and their accompanied encoding are fundamental steps towards achieving 'realistic' solutions and managing expectations.

In their paper, for example, Chauvet and Collier analysed the impact of secondary education in achieving sustained turnaround and of technical assistance in promoting turnaround itself. The conclusion for the first

[72] Dezalay and Garth 2011, p. 280.
[73] Chauvet and Collier Jan 2004.
[74] Ibid., p. 7.
[75] Ibid., p. 8. The paper uses the 'LICUS' (Low-Income Countries Under Stress) nomenclature, still in vogue then, but later substituted for 'fragile states' by the authors themselves. See, for example, Collier May 2009.

correlation is perhaps shockingly detailed for social scientists: '[I]ncreasing the proportion of the population with secondary education from the mean found in LICUS countries, 7.791%, to 8.791%, would raise the probability of reform from 1.79% per year to 1.93% per year.'[76]

Former director of the World Bank's Development Research Group, Collier's influence in donors' policy towards 'fragile states' is long documented. He has been called for advice numerous times during the elaboration of the 2011 *WDR* and the creation of the CCSD,[77] and his research is often incorporated in the Bank's procedures.[78] Moreover, and interestingly, a paper of his sits alone among the exclusively g7+-produced documents on the website of the group.[79] The specific paper with the quantifications just cited, co-written with Lisa Chauvet, was largely quoted in the OECD's *Service Delivery in Fragile States*, and the idea of 'turnaround' – or simply a 'transition out of fragility – was placed in the centre of discussions on how to make development aid effective in contexts of 'state fragility'.

As early as 2005, the Bank's concept note on 'fragile states' also suggested:

> [A] highly dynamic environment also means that the direction of performance may itself change rapidly: situations of prolonged crisis may achieve a rapid *turnaround* or, conversely, post-conflict or gradual reform situations may shift into renewed risk of political instability or blocked reform. Hence it may often be desirable for country assistance strategies to identify not only the country's current performance and direction, but also the *probability of a shift* in scenario within the basic typology above, requiring *adaption* to a rapid turnaround or deterioration in the environment.[80]

However, it took a few years for these ideas to lead to organisational and procedural changes. In the *Operationalizing the 2011 World Development Report*, the World Bank proposed an adjustment to the framework of aid to include 'turnaround situations:'[81] 'These mechanisms

[76] Idem.
[77] Interviews with Gary Milante and Ozong Agborsangya-Fiteu.
[78] See, for example, Fragile States Group (Operations Policy and Country Services) 30 March 2007.
[79] g7+, 'g7+ Documents'.
[80] World Bank 19 Dec 2005, p. 13.
[81] World Bank 4 April 2011, p. 17. 'The 2011 WDR defines "transition moments" as events that make new efforts to prevent or recover from violence possible. These can involve space for deep and wide-ranging change (e.g., the end of a war, a deep national crisis) or more limited change (e.g., a new governmental reform plan, negotiations or

will require guidelines to staff on the types of eligible activities, ways to monitor outcomes, and country eligibility criteria.'[82] In 2013, as seen, the World Bank's IDA17 finally implemented this new framework and included 'turnaround' as a category in great part overlapping with 'fragile states'. The rationale presented is based on the idea of transition as a *spiral*, discussed in the 2011 *WDR*, and the document mainly argues for the seizing of opportunities for change at critical moments', through '*well-targeted and well-delivered* aid'.[83] The report states that the idea of 'turnaround' emphasises the notion that it is possible to '*modulate*' the level of assistance along the 'fragility' continuum. The modulation would allow for 'timely and adequate' responses, and open space for more flexibility towards longer timeframes of reform[84] – no resources wasted.

Crucially, the notion that the Bank can act on situations of transitions or where 'turnaround' moments can be identified has been a key entry point for the Bank's own positioning in the debate, since 'conflict' was never its area of expertise. As a development agency, the idea that it can enable turnarounds by making surgical use of development tools at its disposal has been fundamental in making it an important player in the highly political agenda of 'fragile states'. The Bank cannot make use of force to stop conflict, but it can make conflict less probable by investing in the social conditions that facilitate peace or, so the argument goes, it can enable a quicker and sustainable return to peace after conflict by providing the social incentives that would keep actors away from violence.

The challenge, therefore, has been how to identify the context for the use of each tool, how much of the tool to be used and how to use it. In scenarios perceived as extremely volatile, risky and hardly predictable, this has increased the pressure on donors' offices to produce more and more quantified reports of each possible impact. This 'on duty' expertise, adaptable and timely, generates important pressures over experts to be constantly alert, to all kinds of developments in the field, in the numbers –

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coalition-building between different actors in society). The proposal for providing exceptional support to "turn-around" countries would aim, albeit not exclusively, at events falling in the former category rather than in the latter one.' Ibid., p. 20, footnote 36.

[82] World Bank 4 April 2011, p. 17.

[83] International Development Association (IDA) March 2013, p. 19.

[84] Ibid.

national and international – and in the overall ever-changing 'fragile states' agenda.

Most important in this context, these moves have represented important organisational changes in OECD and the World Bank, involving the introduction of an intense routine of training and learning that is, by design, intended to be recurrent. There have also been changes in the incentives offered to existent staff to work on 'fragile states', and there was, fundamentally, a re-structuring of departments and sectors so as to allow for interconnected analyses and, crucially, the exchange of know-how. The expectations corresponding to these moves are mounting, and professionals can be seen trapped into ever-perfectible expertise. In this reasoning, the 'ideal advisor' is as moving a target as the perfect method or the complete turnaround of a 'fragile state'.[85]

3.2. THE MAKING OF AN 'IDEAL ADVISOR': MANAGING EXPERTISE AND EXPECTATIONS

In the 2012 *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility*, the OECD listed the main criteria to judge the efficiency of M&E practices: relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency, all to be adapted to the context of 'fragile states' and to the realities of data in each country.[86] The document also discusses some quantitative methods that can be useful for M&E practices in 'fragile states', including the so-called 'quasi-experimental approach', 'whereby statistical techniques are used to construct a control group that can serve as a counterfactual.'[87] The counterfactual is necessary to evaluate impact through the simulation of what the reality would be like had no intervention taken place.

What is relevant at this point is to observe what these kind of criteria entail for experts involved.

THE IRONIC CONTRAST IN OECD: PEER-REVIEWING, EXPECTATIONS AND STAFF

Staff in OECD-INCAF have been increasingly expected to provide expertise to OECD governments regarding all aspects of 'state fragility', from conflict

[85] See Annex 7.
[86] OECD 2012, ch. 4.
[87] Ibid., p. 69, box 4.5.

to statistical practices of M&E. In order for this to be possible, these professionals have to carry some background experience in the field and pass through a programme of constant training, learning and peer-reviewing that is also much based on the ability to quantify and classify.

> I had a background in peacebuilding and statebuilding, having worked for the UN in Liberia and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I also wanted to try and have more influence. We [in INCAF] work with donors and have the possibility to advise. We produce papers that hopefully will have impacts.[88]

In addition to hiring professionals with previous relevant experience, just before INCAF was founded, OECD had been increasingly steering several of its sectors and departments to connect and share knowledge so that their mixed expertise could enlighten practices of measuring and managing 'fragile states'.

> Evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities poses unique challenges. For instance, work 'in' and 'on' conflict involves activities that differ from well established development operations and takes place in highly politicised environments. Access to reliable data is scarce and misinformation is rife. The evaluation process itself may have unintended consequences by influencing the behaviour of conflict protagonists. Because of these and other obstacles, guidance is needed to help improve evaluation techniques in this rapidly evolving field.[89]

In order to publish the *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility*, there were two years of tests and peer-reviewing among donor agencies. The results of these were exchanged and analysed in a 2011 workshop, which is said to have gathered around 65 participants from OECD-INCAF and the OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation.[90] The minutes of the workshop list as one of the highlights of the event the merge of the Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation (CPDC) and the Fragile States Group, created in 2003, as seen in chapter one: 'The merger of CPDC and the Fragile States group enabled a wider focus combining peacebuilding and statebuilding, recognising that this is 95% part of the same agenda.'[91] Furthermore, as the workshop itself made clear, the merge meant that staff

[88] Interview with Jolanda Profos.
[89] OECD 2008a. See also OECD 2007a.
[90] OECD, 'Workshop on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: What have we learned?'.
[91] OECD 16-17 Feb 2011, p. 4.

working on 'fragile states' were now meant to develop expertise on 'fragility', conflict *and* evaluation practices.

> Few would dispute that settings of conflict and fragility are complex, combining multifaceted, multi-directional change processes with high levels of unpredictability, a general lack of information, and potential strategic misinformation. The way programmes are implemented on the ground may differ widely from original plans, as practitioners change what they are doing to adapt to an evolving conflict. As a result, it may be difficult to identify what exactly should be evaluated. Although unpredictability and complexity may be inevitable, their frequently negative ramifications for evaluations need not be. Evaluators must prepare for risks, develop robust designs, and ensure sufficient *flexibility* to counter the challenges of unpredictability and complexity. They should select *methods that help to capture complex social change processes and illuminate interactions between interventions and the context*.[92]

One can imagine, however, how difficult it can be to find someone who holds expertise in quantifying and classifying statistical methods, technologies and software of statistical analyses, peacebuilding, conflict, statebuilding, development and 'state fragility'. By stating that these are necessarily interconnected topics, the demands over the expertise in donor agencies are also raised. Staff then are pressured to find the 'right' partners to provide authoritative knowledge in the area they 'still' do not master, or to find support to measure and evaluate more and more quickly.

> I think we were a bit heavy-handed in Busan [2011]; INCAF was driving the agenda too much. But that was because there was a lot of pressure on us. We had to produce something for Busan, there was time constraint. In practical terms, we were four or five people, excluding support staff.[93]

Interestingly, by the time of the Busan meeting, the work of INCAF was being largely coordinated by one person, Erwin van Veen, from the above quote, and the work of IDPS was mostly conducted by another single somehow outsourced member of staff, Donata Garrassi. Indeed, since 2009, OECD-INCAF has produced dozens of reports but it counts with only four or five exclusive analysts at one time. From 2010 to 2013, Donata Garrassi, alone, was in charge of coordinating most activities of the IDPS, even though this role was never clear on the website of the initiative:

[92] OECD 2012, p. 32. My emphasis.
[93] Interview with Erwin van Veen.

> Sometimes it is horrible. Even though I work for everyone, it always looks like I am on the donor side.[94]

She helped organising the g7+ technical and ministerial meetings, assisted in the production of material for the IDPS website, helped with contacts and logistics overall, presented updated reports in international conferences, not only of the IDPS's work but also, at times, covering for colleagues from donor agencies, as was the case in at least one occasion when I was present. There, she also provided advice regarding the g7+'s possible next steps. In addition, when I arrived at the UN building where I was to attend the UN General Assembly parallel ministerial meeting of the g7+ and donors, in September 2013, she was in the hall, welcoming the participants and giving directions. She had said before that she was relieved that 'someone from the g7+' was joining the IDPS 'to help' her.[95] However, it seems that in 2014, Siafa Hage, a g7+ focal point from Liberia, effectively substituted Garrassi in the post. She is now a 'peacebuilding advisor' in OECD. During the June 2013 INCAF meeting that anticipated this substitution, there was much talk about the need to have an 'IDPS person' from the g7+, who would be capable of bringing the experience of a 'fragile state' while also having the mandate to advance the group's agenda. Garrassi's expertise and background did not involve that much.

Indeed, in OECD, the routine of peer-learning easily traps staff working in 'fragile states' in an ever-expanding search for expertise. As the themes linked to the agenda multiply, so their expertise is supposed to, and most importantly, the various OECD networks and sectors – on Evaluation, Governance, Capacity Development, and so on – make these traps even more effective: Since the multi-faceted knowledge is available in different departments and since peer-learning is at the core of the work in OECD, learning more skills by working with other areas is a practical and 'reasonable' expectation.

THE IRONY IN THE WORLD BANK: CLASSROOM AND CAREER

[94] Interview with Donata Garrassi.
[95] Ibid.

In the World Bank, the traps are set in a different way: There are different 'specialisms' in diverse departments, but mostly, training sessions, e-courses and workshops are centrally organized so that staff working on 'fragile states' are actually somewhat trapped in a routine of classroom learning. They are expected to sign up for different courses and there are newly established rules for career progress that in fact require that staff have experience of directly working in some aspects of 'fragile states'. When the Center on Conflict, Security and Development (CCSD) was created, in 2011/12, the team gathered was purposefully diverse in their background experiences: The Center has experts on gender, justice, procurement, environment, M&E practices and other themes perceived to be linked to 'state fragility'.

> When we became the CCSD, we doubled the sector's size from what it used to be. The team is very diverse now and this has been scaled up. Now because we have more people, we are closer to the field and we have more specialists who work on specific things. We are able to respond much earlier [to crises], and our work is much more upstream [it communicates more easily with managers and directors]. There is increased speed and flexibility. The amount of time to get a project approved, get disbursement, all that has decreased. Fundamentally, we also have more people trained: We have 14 courses on working in conflict-affected and fragile states – 380 people taught [until April 2013]. We also have e-learning… This is all representative of this increasing knowledge and capacity development in the Bank.[96]

In fact, there are at least three ways in which the role of staff working in and on 'fragile states' in the World Bank has changed: Staff have new career incentives to both somehow incentivise and make subtly mandatory that analysts have experience in the field. In addition, in order to prepare for this experience and to improve their capacity to learn with this, professionals are expected to attend seminars, workshops and training sessions, besides providing themselves some of the courses and advice regarding 'state fragility'. They are also expected to partner with other sector and networks in the Bank, for example, collaborating with the Open Data initiative by providing data and requiring assistance in their own analyses. These three sets of changes are crucial to understanding the skill traps in which staff in the World Bank find themselves.

[96] Interview with Gary Milante.

Before the many structural changes in the Bank, it is said most analysts clearly prioritised working for middle-income countries or emerging economies rather than 'fragile states'.

> Here it seemed the level of development of the country was your level of development, as a professional. No one wanted to work with the poor countries; they wanted to work with Argentina, for example. But Argentina doesn't need me![97]

> I think, before, there was no compensation [for working in fragile states]: There is a lot of internal competition in the Bank and it seemed people were less competitive after working in fragile states. People like the challenge but they need to be sure…When you work in fragile states, you see less difference, you have fewer things to show. I don't think the financial compensation is as important as the career incentives they give now. It used to be the case, for example, that someone working in a 'fragile state' would miss out on the opportunity to do some networking, to be in touch with managers and senior analysts.[98]

After the IEG 2006 review of the World Bank's work on 'fragile states', the first of its kind, and the 2011 *WDR*,[99] the World Bank created incentives for recruiting and retaining staff.[100] In terms of 'reputation incentives', the changes implemented after 2011 include placing country managers in 'fragile states' at the same level of those in other countries, which answers to the overall feeling, exemplified in the first quote above, that working in a 'fragile states' equalled poor skills.[101] Moreover, the World Bank started recruiting international staff with local experience and more seniority to work in 'fragile states'[102], so that for internationally-recruited staff, experience working in 'fragile states' became a 'strongly desired skill for promotion to senior jobs'.[103] In addition, to tackle precisely the fear of isolation staff used to experience, as expressed in the second quote, the Bank's various sections have received a directive to offer 'predictability' regarding future assignments for staff coming back from 'fragile states'.[104] Finally, and although staff interviewed for the 2013 IEG review of the Bank's work on 'fragile states' say this is the least relevant of the changes, there are new financial incentives for staff working in 'fragile states': There

[97] Interview with Anonymous 1.
[98] Interview with Luis Constantino.
[99] World Bank 2011b; Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2006.
[100] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013, p. 102. My emphasis.
[101] Ibid., p. 101.
[102] Ibid., p. 102.
[103] International Development Association (IDA) March 2013, p. 12, 40.
[104] Ibid., p. 12.

are now an ‘assignment-premium bonus’, a ‘fragile states premium’, a ‘hazard pay’, a ‘rest and recuperation’ pay, and a ‘hardship differential’.[105]

However, these incentives and the increasing ‘fragile states’ portfolio of the World Bank have also raised the pressure for staff to develop new skills or expand existent ones, seen as necessary for such assignments. There are direct and punctual expectations, such as the fact that staff working in ‘fragile states’ now have to attend a ‘mandatory management training’, but interestingly and very importantly, there is indirect and subtle pressure for staff to return the investments and opportunities the Bank is providing. The further differentiation of situations across the ‘fragility’ spectrum, including the new ‘methodological’ notion of ‘turnaround’ countries or situations, and the increasing quantification and classification of ‘fragile states’ leads to expectations that skills will follow, *simultaneously expanding* to encompass more topics, *and specialising*, by developing expertise that is compatible to each and every category of ‘state fragility’.

For that, the World Bank has aimed to develop a ‘community of practice, inside and outside the Bank itself. This has been interestingly exemplified in terms of quantification and classification practices, by partnerships with the WBI to provide advice to the g7+ regarding extractive industries.[106] This in turn counts on the intense data collection and analysis executed by the *Mapping for Results* initiative of the Open Data sector in the World Bank and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).[107] In this case, the ‘community of practice’ the World Bank is said to be creating is also expected to fill the gaps in skills whenever the staff in the Bank requires further expertise. If the CCSD did not have the whole set of skills necessary for the project, it nonetheless was expected to understand what the necessary skills were and find the correct partners inside and outside the Bank, keeping the Bank sitting at the table. Ironically, the demand in this specific case was generated by a request made by the g7+ (discussed in the next chapter).

[105] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
[106] World Bank Institute (WBI) 2012.
[107] See World Bank, 'Mapping for Results'; United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) April 2014, p. 13; World Bank 21 February 2012; United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) January 2014, p. 4; World Bank, 'Ghana Projects for Extractives'.

In accordance with the increasing demand for more experts and expertise, the Bank, mainly though the CCSD, has also increased the number of 'staff learning events', with 'tailored workshops', training (including regional trainings in Africa), a core course on *Violence, Conflict and Fragility*, offered twice a year, and courses on implementation, mostly led by the CCSD Nairobi hub.

I registered for the *Violence, Conflict and Fragility* e-course as an external 'expert', together with a total of 500 internal and external experts from around the world, to understand more of what is taught in such courses. This e-course offers an intense forum for exchange of ideas. However, the contrast is striking between how much it is expected the course will achieve in terms of capacity-building Bank staff and how basic the course material and activities are. The course generally focuses on the 'causes' of 'state fragility', the remedies to be applied and the ways in which donors can help with this cure.[108]

Following insights from the 2011 *WDR* on transition out of 'fragility' and the IDA17's proposition of including a 'turnaround' category, the course looks at how to identify challenges and opportunities in 'fragile states', work with these to enable transitions and make them last. However, the content of the course material is rather basic. For instance, although the main reports on 'state fragility' published by the Bank advocate that work in 'fragile states' should connect concerns with development and conflict, in practice, the course very much separates the causes of conflict in a schematic matrix: The activity includes matching causes and the category of causes – economic, justice, security, global. Moreover, the reading material is mostly composed of extremely short summaries of main texts in academia and policy – they are usually two to five pages-long, and only short references are provided.

It seems that WBI staff themselves struggle to find the formula of how better to teach such highly complex and layered issues to the rest of the staff in the Bank. Thus, it is not only a matter of analysts working in 'fragile states' being expected to take the many courses available, but also of other analysts being able to provide those courses and build their content in the right measure, considering time constraints on both sides. It

[108] World Bank Institute (WBI) 2014.

also seems, however, that some of the courses offered with exclusivity to the Bank's staff are more intense and technically proficient.

> I think the courses that the CCSD is offering, some are very good. One, developed by Gary [Milante, former head of the CCSD in Washington] was especially good, with complex and detailed simulations with imaginary fragile states.[109]

Nonetheless, the CCSD staff does not only design and provide courses and training. It also offers a remote helpdesk for advice on any aspects of 'state fragility', whenever local teams request help in designing or implementing programmes. The CCSD also provides staff that can be immediately transferred to work with local teams in case there is the need for someone to be covered or if the team identifies the need to have an expert on a specific subject.[110] Moreover, the CCSD maintains constant monitoring of a few non-disclosed countries unofficially considered 'fragile states' but not classified as such by the CPIA. Such countries, such as Mali, as one interviewee said, are monitored for incoming crises, so that the Bank is in a position to act fast in the opportunities that might appear for positive transition or 'turnaround'.[111]

This constant monitoring is mostly done, however, by one single person, Khadija Sheik, who is a junior professional in the team. She is also the person in charge of the PCPI indicators. In fact, although the extended team, considering the hub in Nairobi and including support staff, is supposed to be composed by around 40 analysts, the sector in the headquarters is a small area with a few cramped offices. Sheik herself shares a windowless office with two other analysts. Each one is supposed to be *the* CCSD expert in their area, able to travel to 'fragile states' at any moment if requested, while also responsible for contributing to the design of courses, the publication of reports and the advice provided by the helpdesk.

Nevertheless, the 2013 IEG review of the World Bank's work on 'fragile states' has suggested the CCSD has still to greatly increase its impact on the field. It has been considered quite effective in reaching out for partnerships with other agencies, such as UNDP, but less effective in

[109] Interview with Wolfhart Pohl.
[110] Interviews with Gary Milante and Wolfhart Pohl. See also World Bank, 'Working Differently in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations'.
[111] Interviews with Gary Milante and Khadija Sheik.

providing operational support.[112] In 2013, after only two years as head of the CCSD, Milante has left to work for a think tank, and for months he has not been replaced.

To better understand the efficiency traps in which staff find themselves in the World Bank, the leaflet for a recent internal Human Resources campaign is telling:

FIGURE 10: 'ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE', LEAFLET FROM WORLD BANK'S FRAGILITY FORUM 2013

The leaflet both illustrates the pressure and demand for staff to increase and improve their expertise and it acknowledges the traps that this pressure might create by offering constant support to staff working on 'fragile states'.[113]

While the many topics related to conflict and 'fragility' are considered interconnected, not only 'fragile states' are defined by their measured capacity to move out of crisis and poverty, but also donors are trapped into the practical expectation that they will at least know what is to be known in order to achieve effectiveness – of development aid and of states. As donors' reports sell an image of measurable and manageable 'state fragility', experts become at least greatly expected to be themselves able to measure and manage 'fragile states' in their most particular details and the correlations between them.

4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: SKILLS AND THEIR TRAPS

If the idea that technical capacity somehow contributes to exert disproportional influence over 'fragile states' offices is an easy critique, it is

[112] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) Dec 2013, pp. 104-105.
[113] This leaflet was around in the World Bank during the Fragility Forum, in April 2013.

however less obvious and at the same time extremely important to understand that this technical capacity also exerts a toll in donor agencies.

> I do not claim that quantification is nothing but a political solution to a political problem. But that is surely one of the things that it is, and our understanding of it is poor indeed if we do not relate it to the forms of community in which it flourishes.[114]

In order to understand what empowers such practices and skills to construct 'fragile states' it was important to not only discuss what their absence represent in the offices of 'fragile states', but also what traps they facilitate when supposed abundant in donor agencies. Amid the moving target of unpredictable turnarounds and transitions from conflict to development, donor staff become *inexcusable experts* in endless upwards spirals of expertise; moreover, an expertise they themselves practically help to make a necessity in the agenda. These experts no longer have to shoot an animal, but they do need to constantly write a report, offer advice and find the right numbers, even if not actually up to these tasks. In addition, as their expertise are either remote or completely exported, expected to make itself always useful, these experts constantly play a 'double game' in which they need to be both visibly effective and absolutely objective.

The supposed 'objectivity' in quantification would be the 'methodological equivalent of gray suits, adopted by men who otherwise would have even less chance of acting autonomously'.[115] The point is precisely that, while this expertise provides authority to those who lack the authority of votes, it also is less guaranteed a form of resource. Hence, the 'double agents' in the central tiers of the game have a peculiar dynamic: As the expertise is by definition an ever-perfectible one, those who Dezalay and Garth would call 'exporters' – those who provide the technologies to be absorbed and adapted locally by 'importers', in this case, in 'fragile states'[116] – are constantly under pressure to increase and improve their own expertise, egged on by the practical expectations of the game they themselves help to create. By quantifying and classifying, they contribute to

[114] Porter 1995, p. x, Preface.
[115] Porter 1995, p. 98.
[116] Dezalay and Garth 2002; 2011.

reinforcing this style of thinking & doing, but by doing so, they are themselves also constantly pushed over to expand their own expertise.

I suggest these traps are crucial to understand the nuances in the impacts of the quantification and classification of 'fragile states', thus, also central to think of the entry points for change or weak points of power. In depicting the realm of quantifying bureaucrats as the central tiers in the game, I aimed to introduce here a point central to the discussion on power in the next chapter: Quantifying and classifying is an expertise 'especially compelling to bureaucratic officials who lack the mandate of a popular election, or divine right.'[117] Being so, this expertise, with its set of resources and skills, places actors in these central tiers somehow at a distance from other tiers, being that of politicians in donor governments or local leaders and local stories in 'fragile states'.

[117] Porter 1995, p. 8.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COSTS OF ENGAGEMENT AND DISENGAGEMENT: SYMBOLIC POWER AND THE TRAPS OF TECHNICAL EFFECTIVENESS

In the two previous chapters, I analysed the practices that classify 'fragile states' and how these practices become 'socially comfortable', that is, how what they entail in terms of techniques, expertise, skills and results – or effectiveness – becomes naturally expected.[1] My objective so far has been to discuss these practices and skills in their capacity and authority of subtle classifiers, practically composing both 'fragile states' and experts. In this chapter, I look at what is gained and gambled when these practices and skills are at play. I suggest what is at stake in this game is the identification, analysis and management of 'fragile states', that is, these are the issues at hand when actors relate and negotiate. Being so, I look at these stakes to analyse what costs there are for engagement and disengagement for the different actors involved.

As the initial chapters argued, politically sceptical approaches that suggest the altogether dismissal of the label and of the rationale in which it

[1] 'Naturally' in the sense Bowker and Star use the term: 'Naturalization means stripping away the contingencies of an object's creation and its situated nature. A naturalized object has lost its anthropological strangeness. It is in that narrow sense desituated' (p. 299). I add to that the sociological lens applied by Bourdieu: 'Nature and the natural have always been the best instruments of sociodicies' (p. 115). The natural is naturalised through practical sense.

is embedded paradoxically eliminate from the debate both the practical pressures upon 'fragile states' offices to engage and how nuanced engagement can be. Ironically, this overlooking often leads these approaches to ignore precisely the weak links in the chain, thus, the constraints in power and possibilities for change.

This chapter suggests that the widespread presence of the quantifying and classifying reasoning has made non-technical *disengagement* impractical but has also entailed particular costs of *engagement* to all actors involved. Quantification sees donors in an increasingly quick and complex competition for the provision of data and analysis – the more the ever-perfectibility of tools and practices is advocated, the more the arena for competition is enlarged and the more demanding the game becomes. This demand often comes from the very 'unskilled' clients to whom donors have been exporting technical products, such as the g7+ itself. Hence, the same practices and skills that place certain analysts in a position of power have also the potential to be entry points for weakening and change. Meanwhile, the ability of g7+'s representatives to play the quantifying and classifying game has also taken a toll on some of what were supposed to be their main goals: How to fight off the negative connotations of the label? How to avoid over-quantification after creating a Fragility Assessment? How to ignore international databases when national offices have no other statistics to provide and assessments need to be filled out? How to escape the trap of setting common measures and targets and feed comparison once a group is constituted? I take stock of the different costs involved in all these dynamics and what they represent in terms of relations of symbolic power.

Discussing these nuanced and mutually impactful costs leads to a practical and relational approach to power; moreover, one that takes into account the authoritative and impactful position of the quantifying and classifying reasoning, while also considering the difficulties of analysing and countering such a subtle form of power. Therefore, I suggest this to be *symbolic power,* a power that is exerted through the recognition of the authority of its methods, and the misrecognition of its exercise as *power*. Also crucial, and as discussed in chapter two, symbolic power is a power

that counts on the complicity of those seen as least favoured by it[2] – a recognition, misrecognition and complicity that were everywhere in the practices and skills discussed so far.

By analysing how quantifying and classifying practices are made flexible and ever-perfectible, I sought to highlight their mutant character. Accordingly, identifying, analysing and managing 'fragile states' are also ever-changing practices, in that they are based on ever-perfectible knowledge and skills. I suggest that the adaptations this ever-perfectibility invites are constantly negotiated, never consensual or given. To even negotiate, however, actors need to have crossed a *threshold* and have become players, being minimally versed and 'competent' in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states';[3] and once players, they have different views of what their world should look like. Reversely, these different 'worldmakings' at play are intrinsically connected to the resources actors have and, thus, to the diverse impacts with which they are unequally affected. Essentially, thus, symbolic power is in that the authority of quantifying and classifying practices obfuscates their impact in both reinforcing quantification and classification as a threshold in the game and in providing authority to the label these practices help to generate.

I divide these elements into two main streams of analysis: I first analyse the weight the very threshold of quantification and classification has on the possibilities to play the game, thus looking at how actors become players. Second, I discuss what strategies these actors develop to advance their view of the issues at hand, and how they mobilise their capabilities and abilities for that matter.

I subsequently take both these analyses a step further, to look at how the symbolic power in the 'fragile states' agenda has been able to strengthen and expand the quantifying and classifying reasoning to the point of risking alienating or, rather, allowing the self-alienation of politicians, that is, the detachment of what I previously called the central tiers of the game from the tiers of politicians. I also look at how this expansion has entailed a subtle countermove from the g7+ itself to hold to

[2] See Bourdieu 1990b, ch. 8; Bourdieu 2001a, part 2.

[3] 'Players agree, by the mere fact of playing…that the game is worth playing…and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition'; moreover, in order to play, players need capitals, the resources in which the game is based. See Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, pp. 98-100. Emphasis in original.

stories that representatives feel should not be quantified – but which can easily be lost precisely in the group's quantifying tools.

Depictions of symbolic power are indeed to be blurred and nuanced, always relational and containing in themselves instances of moves in perhaps opposite directions. In this spirit, I argue that both the label and the quantification are corroborated, but also that by playing the g7+ creates for itself possibilities of moulding the changing common-sense, and most importantly, it generates pressures over experts to constantly produce and provide data that can be useful. These traps of effectiveness, I suggest, are important weakening points in the symbolic power discussed.

1. SYMBOLIC POWER AND NUANCES: WEAKENING FROM WITHIN

The combination of the two previous chapters offers the realisation that ever-perfectible practices and ever-perfectible skills together create the enabling conditions for competition among providers: As seen, expertise in data and software are not authoritative if possessed only, they gain authority *in use* and in been seen as useful, hence, in being transmitted in the first place. After all, quantifying and classifying practices are developed towards management and 'fixing', thus, their products need to be used and they are improved through use itself, constantly adapting to 'realistic' procedures and expectations.

What is crucial to explore here is that the need to provide useful tools and analyses is a fundamental component of the relations of power in the agenda; it is the circulation and wandering of techniques and numbers that this *need to provide* invites that bring about the points of entry for weakening and changing power. As both skills and tools travel in time and space,[4] they are no one's indefinite monopoly. Davis, Kingsbury and Merry briefly acknowledge this point, but not the enormous relevance of it:[5] '[T]hose with special expertise in the construction or analysis of indicators can overcome these impediments to technical contestation and exercise greater influence than they could in purely political settings.'[6] In the last part of this chapter, I take issue with the ending of this quote, but for now it is

[4] Complementing the argument in Espeland and Stevens 2008.
[5] Davis, Kingsbury et al. 2012, p. 87.
[6] Ibid.

important to emphasise that there is a crucial possibility of exercising influence that becomes more fluid across different agencies, government offices and other groups. The wandering of quantifying and classifying practices, essential for their authority, is at the very core of their subtle weaknesses. This is a key feature of symbolic power, although seldom appreciated in Bourdieu's work: 'The actions necessary to ensure the continuation of power themselves help to weaken it.'[7]

Bourdieu suggested that whenever there are no institutional mechanisms to guarantee the reproduction of power, power tends to be reproduced in a daily basis, taking a personal cost in direct investment.[8] In my view, the very crucial *transferable and mutant* character of quantifying and classifying practices makes of them somewhat 'non-institutional' – at least in a more perennial and contained sense – but also highly competitive. On the one hand, taking part in the 'fragile states' agenda requires embracing the quantifying and classifying reasoning, as disengagement from such practices is too costly. On the other hand, the provision of measures becomes a demand in itself, going beyond the value of each method or tool, and creating a high price of engagement for producers: Guided by the practical sense in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', they see themselves trapped into competition for the provision of such products, since the resource from which they derive authority is by necessity always travelling and ever changing.

Beyond the mere exercise of power, the notion of symbolic power involves a fundamental questioning of what it means to practice power in a subtle way. What makes of symbolic power *power*, even if subtle, is precisely its ability to derive authority from the 'naturalness' of its practices, exerting influence without openly manifesting it as such. This is, however, an exercise of practical sense, not of rationality; it is guided by a sense of the socially comfortable, a feeling for the game. When I combined insights from Bourdieu's and Hacking's work in chapter two it was precisely to disentangle the idea of power from programmatic strategies: The style of thinking & doing is that what works, and by working, it subtly hides the

[7] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 131.
[8] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 129.

mechanisms that make it possible. There is power in these mechanisms and in their practical hiding, and numbers are especially fit for such power. Without entering into too dense a philosophical debate, Porter's words resonate well here: 'Scientific objectivity', such as that attributed to statistics, 'provides answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness' – deciding without seeming to decide, as well said in another quote of his.[9]

In this sense, the idea of symbolic power implies a 'social alchemy', which takes place when resources through which power circulates are perceived as authoritative but not vehicles of domination as such.[10] The practical sense in the quantifying and classifying reasoning would be a major catalyst for this alchemy, changing highly problematic measurements into quasi-scientific policy-making through the dazzle of attractive databases, visually provocative rankings, an avalanche of numbers,[11] the automatism of software analyses and free international data banks – all following the metaphysics of correlation that not only dismisses the need for perfection, but actually embraces error, as long as properly measured and presented. In this style of thinking and doing, while numbers and categories create extremely relevant impacts, the subtlety, blurriness and un-authored way in which this happens dilutes perceptions of power. Moreover, as donors' staff are pressured and trapped and as 'fragile states' recur to self-labelling, the whole agenda seems fraught with too many caveats; not, however, if the caveats themselves illustrate a nuanced form of power in these dynamics, an understanding that opens space for looking at possibilities of weakening and change. To that effect, the idea of symbolic power is indeed uniquely eloquent.

As seen in chapter two, the practical recognition and misrecognition of symbolic power are achieved both via objective and subjective means, by advancing a view of the world that somehow answers to the categories of perception and appreciation developed *in* the objective conditions of this world, and in this view being advanced by those who hold authoritative objective positions, that is, the resources or capitals valued in the game.[12]

[9] Porter 1995, p. 22. A debate around the image of fairness and impartiality of statistics and this latent 'moral demand' would undoubtedly be rich but are beyond the scope of this thesis.
[10] See Bourdieu 1990b, ch. 8; Bourdieu 2001a, ch. 3; Bourdieu 1990a, p. 137.
[11] Hacking 1990.
[12] Bourdieu 1990a, pp. 135-137.

Therefore, what follows is a self-evident world, what Bourdieu called 'doxa'.[13] The capacity, urge and means to quantify and classify help to compose the political truth of 'fragile states' as quantifiable, classifiable and manageable. Most importantly, the objective and subjective practical impositions are subtle victories of symbolic power, exerted with the complicity of those who could be said to be most disfavoured by it.[14] This is so exactly because the world of these actors is naturalised, since ways of perceiving the world are issued by the very structures of such world. That naturalisation, in turn, combined with the lack of certain resources makes of disengagement not only too costly but simply not comfortably envisaged.[15]

Bourdieu called this relational or even circular reasoning structural constructivism – not far removed, I suggest, from the circularity Hacking identifies in his own take on style of thinking & doing. Fundamentally, the recognition of authority and naturalisation or misrecognition stem from internal canons, which means that reasonableness is itself contingent and contextual – what is socially comfortable, as simply but powerfully phrased by Bowker and Star.[16]

I focus here on what, in my view, is the richest and most interesting part of Bourdieu's work on symbolic power, which is precisely in being coherent with a view of the world where practical sense answers to ontological complicity and, thus, where possibilities and constraints are necessarily related and relational, constantly negotiated and re-generated. Accordingly and crucially in this research, classifiers and classified are as flawed oppositions as structure and agency, and the classification implies power as much as it contains the mechanisms to weaken or change it. While power is commonly attached only to an understanding of *forceful engagement*, which is the centre of many politically sceptical approaches to the topic of 'fragile states', symbolic power is in the nuanced forms through which engagement and disengagement are constantly balanced, and most importantly, not imposed to do so but led by the force *and* subtlety of practical expectations.

[13] Bourdieu 1990b, pp. 66, 68.
[14] Bourdieu 2007, p. 210; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b; pp. 167-168.
[15] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 168.
[16] Hacking 2012.

2. THE THRESHOLD OF QUANTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION: BECOMING PLAYERS

The first step in analysing the symbolic power in the 'fragile states' agenda is based on looking more precisely at who the actors involved are and how they were able to qualify as players in the game of 'state fragility' classification, that is, what capitals they bring to identify, analyse and fix 'fragile states'. In this section, I analyse the role quantification and classification have in turning actors into players and how the recognition of the authority of the methods in quantification and classification turn these methods into gatekeepers of the agenda themselves. In the case of the g7+, I look at the role of Finance Ministers in the foundation of the group as the actors who were able to play the quantifying and classifying game, thus crossing the threshold and allowing the g7+ to become a player. I also discuss how it was possible for the group to adopt such contentious a label as 'fragile state' has been. In addition, in the case of what I call official and unofficial *quantifying experts*, that is, staff from inside or outside donor agencies, I look precisely at how this quantifying and classifying threshold expands the possibilities of becoming players to quantifiers previously outside the agenda, thus, also increasing the competition to provide data. This is all central to understanding later what strategies these actors seek, considering the capitals they hold, to advance their own take on the classification of 'fragile states'.

2.1. THE G7+ AND ITS FINANCE MINISTRIES: EMBRACING QUANTIFICATION AND THE 'FRAGILE STATES' LABEL

Externals and internals to the g7+ suggest that it was crucial for its successes that the group started by the action of Finance Ministers:[17]

> It was important that they were ministers of Finance, not diplomats; they can talk about what they are really doing. When you can actually link dollars with priorities, you show you know what you are talking about. They also carry some legitimacy because they are the ones making decisions.[18]

> Maybe that's how Ministers of Finance work, making things happen. We are action people, we go out, we want results, maybe that's what we do. I was never Minister of Foreign Affairs, so I don't know. Maybe they are tied to politics. We

[17] Interviews with Vanessa Wyeth and Emília Pires. See also Wyeth 2012.
[18] Interview with Vanessa Wyeth.

> are not very much tied to politics. We pick up the phone. They write documents. They are very much into protocol. We are very pragmatic.[19]

As those who ultimately decide on the allocation of scarce resources from development assistance, and those who command the ministries where 'development directorates' are usually located, the Finance Ministers of the g7+ do seem to have 'credibility', as Wyeth says, in carrying the message of the group. Vanessa Wyeth, now head of OECD-INCAF, worked for the International Peace Institute (IPI) providing support for the then Liberian Finance Minister, Amara Konneh, in the High Level meeting in Busan, when the g7+ was officially announced. According to Wyeth, the moment was fit for the foundation of the g7+ mainly and precisely due to the strong participation of Finance Ministers.[20]

> They know how to play the aid game; they can engage the donors in their level, they speak their language. This is very important. These people are technocrats with many connections. Emília Pires worked with the World Bank in [Timor-Leste], Sofia Borges [Timorese ambassador to the UN] is married to a high senior UN official [chief of UN OCHA's Policy Development and Studies Branch]; Sarah Cliffe and Emília are friends too.[21]

In fact, one can notice that also and crucially, donor staff who have experience working directly with key representatives in what are now g7+ offices have climbed up to central positions in donor agencies, such as the case of Wyeth herself, but also, as seen, Sarah Cliffe (previous head of the Fragile States Unit in the World Bank and now in the Civil Capacities Group in the UN), Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu (Senior Officer in the CCSD) and Claire Leigh (Head of the ODI's partnership with the g7+). All of them have worked directly with g7+ representatives, providing logistic support, background papers and platforms of exchange, before or at the very beginning when the g7+ was being established.

Coming back to the key role of Finance Ministries in the advance of the g7+, it is important to notice both the many obstacles and the expectations attached to such ministries in 'fragile states', especially in the case of Timor-Leste. As the previous chapter showed, the Finance Ministry in Timor-Leste was the institution to which the highest expectations of

[19] Interview with Emília Pires. This point, as a general distinction, is clearly important, but I focus on understanding what is particular to Finance Ministers in the g7+.
[20] Interview with Vanessa Wyeth.
[21] Ibid.

donors were attached. The Ministry was said to have been designed largely by Bretton Woods institutions with a 'world class' management system, and the sector received a large proportion of the aid allocated by development agencies.[22] Moreover, as it is generally the case in other 'fragile states', the Timorese Finance Ministry is in charge of coordinating development assistance and aid effectiveness, and it is the home of the National Statistics Directorate, thus coordinating quantitative research on key aspects of the government and its relation with donors.[23]

In addition, during the period when the UN was acting in the country, many key government figures, such as Minister Emília Pires herself, as the quote above says, were in close contact with staff from the main development agencies, through the many committees formed to allegedly include nationals in decision-making (see chapter three). Furthermore, and as said by the minister herself in the famous Accra speech mentioned in chapter three, there were at the beginning more than 250 donors representatives in her office at one time, a boom of interest that is acknowledged by many.[24] The Finance Ministry was the institution that most needed the quantifying skills to follow the work of these many donors and to program their own priorities and projects, and also the ministry that most criticised the assistance provided by donors. As seen, the initiative to become a pilot country in the OECD-INCAF's *Monitoring the Principles for International Engagement in Fragile States*[25] came exactly from the perception that the Finance Ministry did not know what donors were doing in the country: They had no central database for development assistance and donors projects, and no M&E system at place to follow what was being done by donors.

> Data is a necessity for both international actors and the Government to guide intervention and public policy. Without quantitative and qualitative, timely and evidentiary data, it is near impossible to accurately determine intervention or the necessity and impact of an intervention in the short, medium or long term. Timor-Leste has consistently debated reports which have used outdated data and statistics…The Government considers

[22] In the case of the work of the World Bank in Timor-Leste, the report by the Joint Assessment Mission, for instance, states that more than a third of the assistance budget was allocated to Infra-Structure and Economic Recovery. See World Bank 1999, Annex 1. See also p. 147.
[23] Timor-Leste Government, 'Ministerio das Financas'.
[24] Barder 11 Sep 2008; interviews with Nuno Mota Pinto, Anonymous 1 and Malcolm Ehrempreis.
[25] OECD 2010a.

> the *support* of accurate data collection one of the single most important contributions that international actors can make at any stage in development in order to determine intervention and budget accordingly.[26]

Signed by Minister Emília Pires in a feedback letter attached to the IEG evaluation of the work of the World Bank in Timor-Leste, the document quoted above is illustrative of how the Timorese Finance Ministry has often felt both compelled to generate data and to find the support to do it as well as the international standards required. I suggest this position, shared with the Ministry of Finance of other member countries, was key in the establishment of the g7+, providing the tools for the group to cross the quantifying and classifying threshold in(to) the 'fragile states' agenda. In fact, quantification is central in Finance Ministries in general, and in the case of Timor-Leste this Ministry was key in establishing the National Strategies and other fundamental directives in the still young country, often going against the advice offered by donors.[27] The Finance Ministry was also the institution to conduct the first quantitative national researches, like the Household Survey (see chapter four), seemly paving the way for more ownership in crucial data collection and management in the country.[28] Indeed, such national initiatives are reason for pride in many 'fragile states', as was the case of the Fragility Assessments themselves.

> The Timor-Leste Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2011 is the first survey of this type ever conducted in the country. It is also special in the sense that it was undertaken entirely by the staff of the National Directorate of Statistics and funded from national resources. Only limited and occasional technical assistance was provided from abroad.[29]

Taking a broader view, it is important to highlight that all focal points of the g7+ in member countries work in the Ministry of Finance. The representative who was nominated the new chair of the g7+ in 2014 is Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Sierra Leone. In addition, the Fragility Assessments are conducted chiefly by the statistical offices of these ministries in pilot countries. Hence, I suggest the

[26] Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011, Attachment 1, 'Comments from the Government', p. 191. My emphasis.
[27] A few of these instances were discussed in chapter three and offer important insights into the way the Minister learned to conduct its work. See Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) 2011, pp. 40-41; Attachment 1, 'Comments from the Government', pp. 193-194.
[28] Timor-Leste Government 2011b. See also Timor Leste 2011.
[29] Timor-Leste Government 2011b, Foreword.

quantifying and classifying reasoning so central in the 'fragile states' agenda was nowhere more present than in Finance Ministries. Furthermore, their role in kick-starting the group, I argue, was thus a major factor in making the g7+ able to play the game. Founded by Finance Ministries, the group was already well positioned to cross the threshold into the 'fragile states' agenda to at least become a player in the game.

TAKING A BUREAUCRATIC STANCE ON THE LABEL

Also important, I suggest this position, based on the bureaucratic power of Finance Ministries, has been fundamental in giving the g7+'s representatives the possibility to embrace the 'fragile states' label that diplomats and Foreign Offices could not afford to adopt, due to political constraints. This is not to say the label is not contentious inside the group; in fact the dissidence within the g7+ and the strategies to win ever more cohesiveness despite this dissidence are discussed in detail in the next section. However, I suggest the fact that the label was adopted at all is very much linked to the fact that the group was founded and is materially supported by Finance Ministries.

The g7+'s official position so far has been to leave room for internal dissidence, while managing to retain the official external identity of the group.

> We didn't *decide* to call ourselves 'fragile'; we *knew we were* 'fragile'…But we say we're easy. They can call themselves anything they like. Some say they are less resilient or more vulnerable. Others say 'fragile', we don't have an issue. We don't go about all these names…[30]

There is also an attempt to reframe the label or redefine it. Indeed, representatives have been emphatic in saying they use the label in their own way.

> Our definition is... It's like a child, we are still young. If you are ten years old, how can you have all institutions in place? It's not strong, that is it.[31]

> We have our own definition of the label. Countries which need more care, more support. We make an analogy with a glass of champagne: if you don't handle with care, it can break.[32]

[30] Interview with Emília Pires.
[31] Ibid.

Slowly and only in 2013 was an official definition more clearly formulated and adopted in an official document:

> A state of fragility can be understood as a period of time during nationhood when sustainable socio-economic development requires greater emphasis on complementary peacebuilding and statebuilding activities such as building inclusive political settlements, security, justice, jobs, good management of resources, and accountable and fair service delivery.[33]

The change was subtle but doubly relevant:[34]

> We are struggling with the labels now and we prefer 'situation, but we are not so much trying to change as we are trying to redefine it. So, for example, political issues such as legitimacy are avoided. Instead of 'legitimate politics', we use 'inclusive politics', because some politicians don't like being considered part of an 'illegitimate' government, of course.

The definition has been growing steady as the group establishes itself; definition, expectations and the group itself have walked hand in hand (I come back to this point ahead). Indeed, while the official discourse is that g7+ countries can use whatever label they prefer at least internally, there have been roadshows, meetings and much internal talk in attempts to get buy-in from all ministries in all countries and to gain increasing unity for the group.[35] Nevertheless, I suggest the source of strength of the g7+ is also so far its source of weakness or limitations: The dissidence regarding the label, for instance, is said to be founded mainly in the fact that so far the engagement in the agenda and with the g7+ has been led by Finance Ministers, without the participation of Foreign Affairs.

> There are historical issues in the agenda...these were ministries of Finance mostly, and they were the ones who carried the New Deal. They had then a problem bringing this message to other politicians. In a meeting, for example, the Finance Minister of South Sudan said they have been having difficulties selling the terminology. Same thing with DRC – but that is just the label.[36]

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[32] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar.
[33] g7+ 2013, p. 1.
[34] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar.
[35] The newsletters themselves can be seen as a constant form of bringing and maintaining cohesion among offices that are not only far apart but also often understaffed. They constantly refer to the ministerial and technical meetings, show pictures, introduce a country and its minister through an interview, and most recently, discuss 'fragile to fragile' cooperation, like the help offered by Timor-Leste to the conduction of election in Guinea-Bissau. See g7+, 'Newsletters'.
[36] Interview with Betty Maina.

> The language really depends on the context; there are different connotations. In diplomacy, the label is trickier. We have been speaking to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and now they understand it, they have been more flexible.[37]

In the next section, I look specifically at the strategies around the quantification and the label itself. Here it is important to emphasise the fact that the Finance Ministries, with their statistical reasoning and less problematic political positioning, have been at the centre of the g7+'s foundation and development. The symbolic power is in that the g7+, through its members' Finance Ministries, has found the capitals necessary to become a player in the classification of 'fragile states', but with that the group has now to thread carefully in defining the contours of the common-sense they want to advance, avoiding the pitfalls of over-quantification and managing the costs of corroborating the game through the labelling.

It would not be symbolic power though if there were not pressures as well over those who are yet seen as most favoured by the agenda. Contrary to common sense, I suggest these other actors are better called '*quantifying experts*' exactly to highlight the pressures that have eliminated the barriers around donor agencies, opening space to many experts able to, simply, quantify.

2.2. QUANTIFYING EXPERTS: OPEN DATA AND THE TRAPS OF EFFECTIVENESS

A key entry point of weakening or change in the balancing of engagement and disengagement, that is, in symbolic power, is not without irony. The merge of the quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda has paved the way to make data absolutely central in the development initiatives towards' fragile states'. With that came the practical pressure to make data available to be further used – if development is the ultimate goal, it became reasonable to expect that data from the governments and from major donors are made more transparent and available. This practical sense culminated in 'open governments' initiatives[38] and also in a general 'open data' move that has encompassed major donor institutions. Open data is defined by the World Bank as

[37] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar.
[38] See OECD, 'Public Sector Innovation and e-government. Open Government Data'.

'technically' and 'legally open'.[39] The irony is in that the more the World Bank, OECD and other donors open their databases and advocate for open data policies in 'fragile states', the more pressure there is to be constantly up-to-date with the competition, represented by any other experts able to quantify. In turn, the open data rationale pushed the quantifying and classifying reasoning even further, turning data into something 'glamorous',[40] desirable and essential for all aspects of development.

'Fragile states'' offices now facing the demand for open data can choose from an increasing array of providers, from think tanks, university research groups, private companies and consultants – as in the case of the Development Gateway software discussed in the previous chapter – besides the usual big donors, all taken on board due to their statistical capacity. The power to classify with its authority based on quantification ironically trespasses the borders of donor agencies and invites *in* other quantifying experts, opening competition among highly-skilled staff of diverse organisations. The nuanced features of symbolic power are exactly in these dynamics: While the competition is open enough among these experts to create weakening pressures over the positions of 'official' donors' staff, it is far from open enough to become 'democratic'. The unbalance of skills between these experts and 'self-quantifiers' in 'fragile states' guarantees the symbolic power is *power* – 'one person's infrastructure is another's brick wall, or in some cases, one person's brick wall is another's object of demolition.'[41]

As data becomes a necessary and valued raw product, the 'new oil',[42] open for grabs to be further re-worked and used in the making of other products, and as numbers and classifications travel, competition develops in many different directions. Indeed, who knows who can take the next interesting step with data produced by other parties?

I look at one example of these dynamics to better illustrate who these quantifying experts are and how some of them, externals to 'official' donor agencies, become allowed in the 'fragile states' agenda, making the position of donors' staff as quantifiers and classifiers less guaranteed. It is

[39] See glossary in Annex 8.
[40] Interview with Neil Fantom.
[41] Lampland and Star 2009, p. 17.
[42] Interview with Neil Fantom.

important to clarify that what I call quantifying experts is the ensemble of 'official' donors' staff and any other quantifying experts that somehow become players in the agenda. The issue being precisely that this ensemble is not a given, but constantly negotiated and changed, and that 'fragile states', as users of data, become crucial in these negotiations – the nuances the notion of symbolic power invites.

OPEN SEASON ON OPEN DATA

One example of these negotiations or, rather, of how they open space for external experts, can be found in the urge to create international platforms based on open data and open source software to allegedly facilitate and improve governance in 'fragile states'. This kind of initiative very much counts on data produced by major donors being free but does not, in any way, guarantees that such producers will have a relevant role in the use of it. Moreover, the specific project discussed here relies on requests by the g7+, taken by quantifying experts to represent windows of opportunity to gain new territories in the agenda.

The previous chapter briefly mentioned the request made by the g7+ to the CCSD, in the World Bank, for assistance in the development of strategies for their extractive industries, which also involved assistance in the establishment of mechanisms of 'fragile to fragile' cooperation. The request led the CCSD to form a partnership with the UNEP in a project entitled Geo-mapping Extractive Resources in the g7+ Fragile States.[43] The request of the g7+ was first addressed by the WBI, followed by a workshop organised in 2012.

> We [the WBI] help with capacity-building in three ways. The first is through knowledge exchange. One example is the extractive sector. We connect g7+ countries which are new to the industry. South Sudan, for example, needed guidance. Timor-Leste could participate. We connect ministries of natural resources, procurement sectors, we brought Ghana as well, which has stronger governance capacity in the extractive industry. But Timor went well through its transition, so we can learn with that as well. The second thing is that we offer innovation. We offer a report or we offer dynamic maps, infomedia, interactive spatial and temporal information. This helps the dialogue with the population as well. And third, we help with collaboration: We usually offer support to

[43] See World Bank Institute (WBI) 2012; Global Center on Conflict Security and Development (CCSD) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) 31 Jan 2013; United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) January 2014.

> governments, we try to create collaboration among all stakeholders, help with coalition building. We are one of the few who have been providing capacity and support to the g7+ in the last few years.[44]

In collaboration, the WBI, CCSD, the Open Data sector of the World Bank, UNEP and the g7+ have agreed the project would take off with the following plan:

> The primary purpose and long term goal of the proposed mapping platform would be to become the *global data repository and international standard* for boundary and ownership information for all extractive industry concessions and contracts in fragile states.[45]

As additional contributions, the coordinators envisage the platform can work as an example of 'innovative' big data[46] and it would support the monitoring of indicators post-2015.[47] What is interesting about it for the discussion here is that the project in practice counts on having constant access to *open data*. The working draft states that generating data is excessively expensive and that the 'rate of change of open source mapping software'[48] is simply too high, that is, such softwares change too often for the platform to be fit for one type of software only.[49] The platform would invest in 'developing data layers that are compatible with open source standards and that can be used by all open source mapping platforms going forward.'[50] For this reason, 80 percent of the total costs go for design, data management and, crucially, *maintaining relationship with data providers* and users (I come back to this last point ahead).[51] If almost none of the investment will be directed at generating or buying data is because the international platform will count on *open data* becoming a largely available component.

[44] Interview with Ozong Agborsangya-Fiteu.
[45] World Bank and UNEP 11 Dec 2013. Available at https://sites.google.com/site/ciesindata4fragilestates/file-cabinet, p. 2. My emphasis.
[46] See glossary in Annex 8. It is obvious how importantly connected this is to the discussion so far, but as far as the specific debates on the impacts of multi-dimensional rankings, measuring and comparison between complex political issues go, the terminology is not essential for this research.
[47] World Bank and UNEP 11 Dec 2013. Available at https://sites.google.com/site/ciesindata4fragilestates/file-cabinet, p. 2.
[48] See glossary in Annex 8.
[49] World Bank and UNEP 11 Dec 2013. Available at https://sites.google.com/site/ciesindata4fragilestates/file-cabinet, p. 9.
[50] Ibid., p. 8.
[51] Ibid.

It is not surprising, thus, that the initiative was presented by Agborsangaya-Fiteu, from the WBI, in an international conference held in March 2014, with the aim to create a Blueprint for Immediate and Long-Term Spatial Data Needs of Post-Crisis Government, especially targeting 'fragile states'. The event was organised by the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) and the Earth Institute, both at Columbia University, and participants included technical experts from Google, the UNEP, the African development Bank and g7+ representatives, including Minister Emília Pires and Helder da Costa, from Timor-Leste and the g7+ secretariat, among other analysts from think tanks, NGOs and private companies.[52] The coordinators[53] argue the project is necessary to address important issues in the 'fragile states' agenda.

> Knowing what questions to ask and understanding the issues and needs of a country context is critical to the process of understanding what data to collect and how to apply it…Fragile states governments haven't found a way to secure the data revolution dividend in a lasting manner.[54]

Most importantly, it is suggested there is a need to understand what specific data from this set could be produced and used in which specific 'stages of fragility', an area of future work in the project. Therefore, spatial data is argued to be of extreme relevance for policy-making, remedying the '*information vacuum*' in which 'fragile states' are said to make decisions and providing tailored inputs for development solutions.[55]

The support offered by the experts who coordinated the project involved the creation of an 'independent international advisory group' and a 'technical support unit'. In addition, there is an expectation to raise core funds and to have an 'administrative agent to accept projects funds'.[56] Both kinds of support were requested and said to be welcome by the g7+ representatives present in the conference, seemly an attempt to address the perceived lack of understanding by g7+ officers themselves of how spatial data can be useful for their governments.

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[52] CIESIN March 2014, p. 1.
[53] Interestingly, so far, except for the general administrative contact provided, it is not clear what the composition of the Columbia team is, not even in a higher level. A few names are sparsely mentioned as participants in the workshop, but nothing is said as to the nature of their participation.
[54] CIESIN March 2014, p. 2.
[55] Ibid., p. 3.
[56] Ibid., p. 5.

> At present, *fragile countries are unable to articulate their needs clearly* and to craft cost-effective strategies for whole of government activities. The g7+ member states request ongoing independent advisory services based on *[a] lack of understanding* of spatial data means and their associated benefits toward cost-effective strategies. They request support with evaluations of their own needs and of those external actors offering services.[57]

The project also requests that 'data created in the context of development projects is repatriated to the government for further use.'[58] The donors and coordinators involved are supposed to raise funds for the initiative, select and develop pilot studies with g7+ countries, which will be submitted for analysis by the governments in question and the secretariat of the group, and support countries with specific data collection and analysis, not to mention offering the technical and supposedly independent advisory support in the form of the working groups requested.[59]

Nevertheless, so far the OECD, although allegedly seen as an internationally valued body for data production and analysis, has not been involved. The World Bank itself contributed for the 'expert consultation' by presenting its Geo-mapping project, but it is not clear what its role would be in the international platform of spatial data for 'fragile states'.

These absences and ambiguities in regards to OECD and the World Bank, in terms of participation in the project, are an eloquent component of the symbolic power in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. The World Bank, for instance, has made huge investments in open data, perhaps helping to turn it into an acceptable and desired policy for other providers through its immense datasets made freely available.[60] Thus, its non-guaranteed place in a platform such as that promoted by CIESIN, after the presentation of an existing related project, invokes the caveats that so subtly compose symbolic power. The World Bank was an earlier official advocate of open data, an initiative supported by president Zoellick. In fact, this was considered something to be proud of among the Data Sector staff. Neil Fantom, one of the coordinators of the

[57] Ibid. My emphasis.
[58] Ibid., 4.
[59] Ibid., p. 5.
[60] In one year of the Open Data Initiative, the World Bank had already 'shared data visualization tools with countries, developed a Mapping for Results application, four iPhone apps, and a new tool for tracking aid flows'. See World Bank 20 April 2011.

Open Data Initiative in the Bank, *proudly* published an amusing picture with Zoellick in an event to celebrate the initiative.

FIGURE 11: FROM THE WORLD BANK'S OPEN DATA BLOG[61]

Two key achievements of the project are said to be that now the Bank can publish to the International Aid Transparency Initiative's registry and can engage with indicators on development progress.[62] However, the same dear idea of open data places the World Bank in a somewhat non-institutional position: Open data does not hold the institutional mechanisms that might guarantee a privileged position in terms of data analysis and use, at least not as much as other kinds of tools; in fact, any such position needs to be fought case by case with direct engagement. As the style of thinking & doing evolved to make of data a 'raw' product, it becomes less of a given what will be made of it.[63]

The data provided in the Geo-mapping project is open and can be used in international projects like the 'Blueprint for fragile states' spatial data platform without its accuracy, usefulness, quality or reputation been any kind of guarantee that the World Bank itself would play a role in the platform initiative. Moreover, much depends on the g7+'s requests: The platform needs to be seen as useful (and be indeed used), and the kind of data to be made available needs to somehow be seen as interesting by the countries in the g7+, which requested the assistance in the first place.

This is not to say g7+'s officers have somehow a superior power to influence and mould the process, but that donors do not *hold* this power,

[61] Fantom is on the top right, and Zoellick, in the middle of the picture. It all does remind one of something Hacking says: 'An enormous amount of scientific activity is pursued because it is playful.' Much is done for curiosity, but half of curiosity, he says, is play. The socially comfortable, after all, would require some playfulness. See Hacking 2012, p. 608.
[62] Badiee 20 April 2012.
[63] A famous TED Talk illustrated that view well: TED Talk Feb 2009.

much less alone. Users become vital for the power of the methods donors themselves are so prone to exalt and develop. The influences are still asymmetric – hence, *power* – but importantly blurred.

The style of thinking & doing has been set to increasingly take into account also the visual aspect of quantification and classification, which turned it all so tempting to make such attractive products openly available. The reasoning, the technologies, the comfortable are all essential elements to make this circularity 'work'. Nonetheless, open data implies by nature a lack of institutional restraints for use, re-work and re-aggregation. What we see then is that the end-use of such products are chased up by quantifying experts, led to pursuit and somehow dispute the chance to make interesting use of their own data. This is a crucial aspect of symbolic power; the power to represent the world and the authority to convey this representation are constantly fought for in subtle terms. Moreover, the number of players in this case has been increasing exponentially, as the 'fragile states' agenda creates the conditions to embrace 'unofficial' quantifying experts and reduces the 'certainty' in the role of 'official' ones.

In the case illustrated, open data is eagerly flowing towards the 'vacuum of information' in 'fragile states', subtly reinforcing the notion of 'state fragility' but also subtly placing donors in less guaranteed positions of direct influence. Providing (open) data is ever more essential in generating authority for engagement in the agenda; the very high position accorded by the 'blueprint' project to the *relationship with data providers* is an important sign of this. However, disengagement is a constant risk, against which donors need to fight case by case, by providing always more data and attempting to secure a position on the uses made of it.

2.3. THE RISKY BUSINESS OF POSITIONS

What these two sub-sections sought to highlight, together, is the uncertainty and nuances the symbolic power invites. Through its authority, symbolic power established the threshold which actors need to cross to become players. However, through its subtlety, it also make the position of players a less guaranteed one, as symbolic power brings within it its very elements of weakening and change – in the successful but limited influence

of Finance Ministries, or through the traps of effectiveness in open data. Therefore, actors are constantly engaged in practices that simultaneously attempt to avoid re-disengagement (losing ground), while also trying to shape the change to come. The following two sections focus on how these attempts take place.

3. STRATEGIES AROUND THE LABEL: 'THEY', 'WE', DISAGREEMENTS AND THE BLURRINESS EVERYWHERE

As symbolic power in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' unfolds by both retaining the authority in its methods by managing the costs of its subtle influence, a crucial step in understanding symbolic power is in looking at how these costs are managed considering the positions of actors. Sticking to the relational approach advocated so far, I do not focus on the actors, but on the issues in which their efforts seems to be most strenuous – therefore, indicating more is at stake: the quantification and the classification or labelling itself. I suggest these are the realms in which the g7+ and the quantifying experts most intensely try to shape the changes to come, thus, those are realms that very much illustrate the symbolic power at play.

DESCRIPTION AND PRESCRIPTION: THE WAYS OF SYMBOLIC POWER

The complicity of the g7+ with the labelling is central in the symbolic power I identify. In this sense, I suggest a rich way to portray this component of *power* in symbolic power comes from the combination of ideas of description and prescription.[64] Together they allow analysing precisely how label, labelling and group compose one another.

In the 'fragile states' agenda, politically sceptical critics are right to point at the heavy impact labels with such negative connotation have on the way international politics are played out around those so-named. The nuances of such impacts, however, are many and extremely important. On one hand, the price of disengagement with the classification is high: Ignoring the style of thinking & doing political management of 'fragile

[64] See Bourdieu 2001a, part 2, ch. 3. These notions perfectly congruent with the ideas of 'theory effect' and 'looping effect', in Bourdieu's and Hacking's work, and discussed ahead.

states', with its quantifying and classifying reasoning, implies leaving aside the possibilities of somewhat directing the work of ever-perfectibility. On the other hand, the price of engagement with this style of thinking & doing is to corroborate the reasoning that helps to compose 'state fragility' as a political truth. Hence, it means to be accomplice, for instance, in practically defining what the offices in 'fragile states' *can* measure and in establishing how 'fragility' can be overcome – through quantified methods. These two prices are connected by the ability of symbolic power to turn description and prescription of a group into one and the same:

> [I]t is in the constitution of groups that we best see the efficiency of representations, particularly those of the words, words of order, the theories that contribute to make the social order by imposing principles of di-vision, and in general, the symbolic power of all political theatre that executes and officialises the visions of the world and the political divisions.[65]

For Bourdieu, scientific practices have the power to produce a 'theory effect', by representing the world in such coherent and empirical form (description) that not only a representation is created but also the conditions for practices to erupt in engagement with this representation, positively or negatively, but in either way constructing the world itself (prescription).[66] When those in the group labelled adopt practices of either refutation or acceptance of the label, the engagement helps to corroborate one vision of the world and its divisions by acknowledging the existence of the category. Moreover, this acknowledgement of either type is more likely to occur if the category easily corresponds to the modes of perception and appreciation actors practically acquired and developed. In the case of quantification, Porter eloquently puts it: 'As with the methods of natural science, the quantitative technologies used to investigate social and economic life work best if the world they aim to describe can be remade in their image;'[67] that is, the world and the category, inseparable, have equal potential to influence each other and just as much.

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[65] Bourdieu 2001a, p. 190: 'c'est dans la constitution des groupes que se voient le mieux l'efficacité des représentations, et en particulier des mots, des mots d'ordre, des théories qui contribuent à faire l'ordre social en imposant les principes de di-vision, et, plus largement, le pouvoir symbolique de tout le théâtre politique qui réalise et officialise les visions du monde et les divisions politiques.'
[66] Ibid., p. 194.
[67] Porter 1995, p. 58.

In Bourdieu's formulation, this regards the complementarity of objective and the subjective stakes in the symbolic power, which gives 'authority' a central role in the production of di-vision in the world. The authority is as reliant on actors' positions as it is on the potential of the representation itself to make the world self-evident.[68] Hacking has worked along the same line, highlighting the crucial peculiarity of the interaction of labels with human kinds.[69] Since the notion of human kinds would not necessarily fit the idea of groups in general, such as the g7+, I need to be careful in tracing a comparison between Bourdieu's 'theory effect' and Hacking's 'looping effect'. That said, however, the mechanisms of engagement and disengagement, description and prescription are so commonly appropriate to both that comparison to that extent can be rich.

For Hacking, the interaction of a label produced in a style of thinking and doing with a certain human kind/group has the potential to create a looping effect, by which kind and knowledge grow together: Cause, classification, and intervention are 'of a piece'.[70] He sees cause here as 'practical causality' and intervention as a general form of management. Both are intrinsically connected, as practical causality would be the thinking and doing in terms of principles that one can use to interfere and manage, which he accords close proximity with economics. Moreover, the two elements are fundamental in defining the label:

> [T]o acquire and use a name for any kind is, among other things, to be willing to make generalizations and form expectations about things of that kind. We should take for granted that guessing at causes goes hand in hand with increasingly *precise definition*.[71]

Thus, labels, definitions, causes, expectations and the group itself also are *of a piece*, together measured and together managed. Here, the discussion in chapter four comes to mind, as the multiplication of sub-labels, correlations and proposed fixtures walk hand by hand. To think of these dynamics in broader terms, Bourdieu's synthesis is powerful: 'The

[68] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 67.
[69] Which he defines generally as different from natural kinds, kinds that hold for a while, and 'kinds about which we would like to have systematic, general, and accurate knowledge; classifications that could be used to formulate general truths about people; generalizations sufficiently strong that they seem like laws about people, their actions, or their sentiments'. See Hacking March 2012, p. 2.
[70] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[71] Ibid., p. 10. My emphasis.

categories according to which a group thinks of itself and according to which it represents its own reality contribute to the reality of the group.'[72]

Symbolic power, therefore, describes and prescribes, being power because it is able to create a balanc*ing* between the high prices of both engagement and disengagement. Engagement is somewhat complicity; disengagement is 'heretic', as Bourdieu phrases it, implying political struggle.[73] I suggest the self-labelling and self-measurement of 'fragile states' so far have had within parts of both – a heretic complicity, defining of and defined by symbolic power.

The balance between engagement and disengagement is, therefore, a practical understanding of the costs and gains in making description and prescription into one piece. In the following I analyse instances of this balancing by looking at the strategies actors put into practice in what regards the labelling, to subsequently discuss strategies around quantification.

3.1. WE, THE FRAGILE STATES

If the coming change in the world is to be moulded, symbolic power is in the exercise of an influence that practically attempts to secure for one or another actor the most significant power over how this moulding will take place. As the g7+ plays the game, there is a constant but subtle struggle over how exactly the *commonality* of 'fragility' should be played out.

Interviewees stated there has been considerable pressure from donors for the g7+ to speed up the development of *common* indicators,[74] which would, of course, fit perfectly with the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states': Common indicators would facilitate commensuration and comparison, hence, also enabling ranking in the name of the need of donors to establish priorities. The said pressure of donors over the issue of common indicators – as opposed to country-indicators, as seen – is hardly something obviously stated and one can assume it is probably carefully managed in private meetings and conversations. However, the subtle defensive positions by g7+

[72] Bourdieu 2001a, p. 195. My translation: 'Le catégories selon lesquelles un groupe se pense et selon lesquelles il se représente sa propre réalité contribuent à la réalité de ce groupe.'
[73] Ibid., p. 188-190.
[74] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar; Interview with Paul Okumu.

representatives in meetings seem to almost silently answer to these demands, as instantiated in the quote below by a g7+ officer during an OECD-INCAF meeting:

> We have to be sensitive in not imposing indicators that are not useful for some countries. We should focus on ground realities, and development partners should take this into account. There is also a sense of progress that needs to be undertaken in countries that are not being piloted. The deal is overarching, everyone agreed to it.[75]

The group has systematically avoided mechanisms that might facilitate comparison among member countries and rankings. The g7+ states, for instance, that even if the Fragility Spectrum is the basis of the much quantitative Fragility Assessment, it should be seen as a *qualitative* tool, which 'attempts to understand the specific stage a country may be in, taking into account the overall transition process underway.'[76] The main document on the Fragility Spectrum warns of the danger that donors may see it instead as a quantitative tool and use it for comparison and ranking: 'It is important to continue to emphasize that the fragility spectrum is predominantly a tool for internal benchmarking and it is not intended to rank countries at a particular level.'[77] In order to avoid these possible uses of the Spectrum and Assessment, the g7+ argues standard quantitative indicators should be avoided, just as no g7+ country should be placed entirely in one category of the Spectrum: 'The strength of the fragility spectrum lies in assessing the different dimensions and increasing sensitivity to the linkages between them, which will get lost if countries are placed wholly in one particular stage.'[78] Most interestingly, the document on the Spectrum says that the way two g7+ countries are in the same stage is qualitatively different from one another. The key is in that instead of generic stages of 'fragility', the g7+ advocates a mutant analysis of 'experiences':

> [B]oth the consolidated spectrum and indicators menu will continue to be living documents, constantly evolving to reflect the manner in which fragility is experienced in fragile states and the measures that fragile states feel are relevant in helping them progress to resilience.[79]

[75] My transcript from the 5-6 June 2013 OECD-INCAF ministerial meetings. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules.
[76] g7+ 2013, p. 9.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

One aspect is highly eloquent of the reasons why a warning by the g7+ against comparison has been perceived as necessary: South Sudan's and Sierra Leone's – not Timor-Leste's – Fragility Assessment, which were highly supported by donors, both offer a subtle comparison with other countries that conducted pilot studies (although avoiding exclusively allocated stages in the Spectrum):

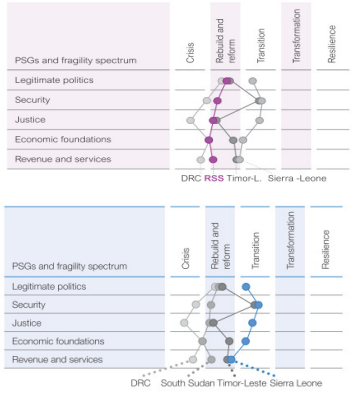


FIGURE 12: COUNTRY COMPARISON IN SOUTH SUDAN'S AND SIERRA LEONE'S FRAGILITY ASSESSMENT[80]

In addition, South Sudan's and Sierra Leone's assessments, as opposed to the Timorese one, offer a list of common indicators at the end of their reports.[81]

It would be fruitless to attempt to trace the influences of each donor representative in each part of every Assessment produced so far, considering the mix composition of working groups, the presence of consultants, steps of revision and so on.[82] Nonetheless, the fact that at the time of these reports the g7+ was chaired by Timor-Leste, in the figure of Finance Minister Emília Pires, is telling, just as the country's long claim for more ownership in development assistance.

What is important to consider is that common indicators became expected *as the g7+ consolidated itself* as a group. Since its inception, the group's stated strength was precisely in their shared experiences with 'fragility': 'We are all emerging from fragility and have been affected by conflict.'[83] I suggest that as the group consolidated the 'we' in such circumstances, the g7+ indeed helped to create it, for good and for worse.

[80] Republic of South Sudan 2012, p. 1; Republic of Sierra Leone 2012, p.2.
[81] Republic of South Sudan 2012, p. 12; Republic of Sierra Leone 2012, p.13.
[82] A similar argument can be found in general terms in Rocha de Siqueira 2014.
[83] g7+, 'Pathways toward Resilience. The journey continues...'

> The reality of our existence as conflict-affected states often comes into play whenever we try to meet. In a euphoric party after the g7+ Busan meeting, Guinea Bissau's Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Integration, Helena Nosoline Embaló, graciously offered on behalf of her country to host the g7+ ministerial meeting in 2012. In New York earlier in the year, we became concerned for her safety during unrest in her country, but were relieved to find that she was well, but had been detained and was unable to leave her country. One of our 'focal points' from Somalia recently avoided a suicide bombing that injured others who were with him. At each event our Afghani friends overcome many challenges to be with us. And yet each time they turn up with determination, enthusiasm and a smile. I am indeed very proud of our g7+ family.[84]

Many suggest the cohesiveness of the group is in fact a comfort, and that is one of the very reasons offered to explain how the g7+ was born in the first place, out of a sense of commonality of experiences and challenges.

> When we came together [in 2008, Accra], we found out we had so many similarities... Shouldn't we maybe share our experiences: 'How did you solve this problem...? This is how I did…' So we wouldn't feel we are alone. And then it just developed through... We should have a voice and a position on this, because this is a policy that affects all of us. We needed to know we were not alone…At the beginning, it was very hard. It felt like we were backwards, or there was something wrong with us... But we said 'no, there is nothing wrong with us. It's the situation we ended up in, we are all human beings, should all be respected and look at each other as normal human beings, and you happened to be born in a country that was not correct [sic], so now that you are there, you want to fix it, let's give hands to each other'. So we tried that... and slowly we managed not to feel this complex of inferiority, guilt, whatever... It is like... 'Hey, I am here to fix it, nobody is forcing me, I want to do it myself, and I want to do it because no one else is doing for me, so I have to do it. If I wait for others, they cannot understand my problems properly...'[85]

The price of this engagement, however, is to powerfully create 'fragile states' as a political truth, with the accompanying expectation that the g7+ generate common indicators to not only firmly establish differences in problems and rates of progress among members but also to clearly enclose 'state fragility' issues in one clear-cut group, differentiating it, for instance, from 'other developing countries'.

> The passage from the stage of practical group to the stage of instituted group…supposes the construction of a principle of classification capable of producing the set of distinct properties that are characteristics of the collection of all members in the group and the annulment, at the same

[84] Costa 2012, p. 101. Costa uses 'conflict-affected states' and 'fragile states' as synonyms in the article.
[85] Interview with Emília Pires.

> time, of the set of inappropriate properties that a group or the collection of its members possess otherwise…and that could serve as basis for other constructions.[86]

It seems that as the cohesiveness of the group grew in importance for its members themselves, it has also become practical for donors to differentiate among groups of recipients. As the world was able to adjust to the representation, the representation became stronger, increasingly being accepted as objective itself. Ironically and powerfully, this becoming of the political truth of 'fragile states' unfolds even if representatives have not reached a consensus over the label within the very g7+. Managing disagreements within involves many costs, which also serves to point at the high investments the group has made in the game.

THE DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN

Inside the g7+, the 'fragile state' label is said to be tolerated by the government of some member countries only to a certain extent. Indeed, the official position of the g7+ in terms of the label adopted is said to also vary depending on the setting.

> It is different when you are talking about yourself and when someone else is talking about you. I think countries are more comfortable with applying the word 'fragile' to themselves than when external bodies use that term. Also, in the g7+ it is different – some countries are using the word in a different context…using language such as 'the g7+ group of…post-conflict or conflict-affected countries', and they will say instead of 'fragility' spectrum, they will call it 'resilience' spectrum. So, different countries will use different language depending on receptivity. Some countries are very comfortable in using the word 'fragile', such as Timor-Leste, other countries such as DRC have issues in using the term politically, so they use different language.[87]

The quote above reflects Claire Leigh's position as someone who has been providing technical and analytical support to the g7+ since its inception. She leads the ODI Budget Strengthening Initiative (BSI), which was the one referred to, previously, as the provider of some sort of 'pro-

[86] Bourdieu 2001a, p. 191: 'Le passage de l'état de groupe pratique à l'état de groupe institué…suppose la construction du principe de classement capable de produire l'ensemble des propriétés distinctives qui sont caractéristiques de l'ensemble des membres de ce groupe et d'annuler du même coup l'ensemble des propriétés non pertinents qu'une partie ou la totalité de ses membres possèdent à d'autres titres…et qui pourraient servir de base à d'autres constructions.'

[87] Interview with Claire Leigh.

bono think tank assistance' to the g7+. She worked for both Tony Blair's Africa Governance Initiative and as a senior policy advisor for Gordon Brown's Strategy Unit. Her experience involves also providing advice to the governments of Liberia and Rwanda. In addition, she supervises the work of outsourced ODI staff exported to the g7+.[88] Her opinion in what regards the interaction of g7+ representatives with major donor' offices, therefore, is telling at least of something to be analysed.

On the issue of g7+ members having diverse receptivity to the 'fragile state' label, there are indeed important internal tensions and country representatives are not shy of admitting them. In general, the representatives who serve as focal points for the g7+ agree with the use of the label but they face difficulties in selling it to other authorities in their governments.

> Many people in the countries don't like the label yet and we keep balancing. They sometimes prefer 'resilience'.[89]
>
> Part of my work was to help the African countries to reengage with internal bodies. There were some clashes. Something that has been very challenging is to have this language adopted. The label 'fragile' is very contested and the African Union doesn't use it.[90] That resulted in a lot of backlash. It was hard to advance the fragility agenda in Africa. The g7+ has refined the label. [In 2012], there was work to convince stakeholders, irrespective of nomenclatures, that the principles [PSGs] are the core.[91]
>
> The term of 'fragility' is difficult'. In political terms, it is difficult. Two countries are not going to use 'fragility', but we don't try to force.[92]

According to interviewees, and despite the use of the label in documents produced in those countries, South Sudan and DRC are the two

[88] Interviews with Claire Leigh and Leigh Mitchell. See Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 'Claire Leigh'; Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 2014.
[89] Interview with Mbairo Mbaiguedem (Chad).
[90] This might be changing, which could be significantly connected to the efforts of the g7+ in the African continent. In Jan 2014, the African Union's 22nd African Summit held a session that launched the African Development Bank Group's High Level Panel on Fragile States. The Final Report of the Panel states that the AU Assembly '*endorses* the report and its recommendations and *mandates* the High-Level Panel led by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf [from Liberia, head of the Panel] to press on with her efforts to implement the recommendations of the report, in close collaboration with the Commission and Member States, within the framework of the Union's programme of activities'. See African Union 30 - 31 January 2014, p. 512. Curiously, however, the report presented by the Panel on Fragile States in the Summit mentions the *New Deal* and the 'peacebuilding and statebuilding goals' (that is, the PSGs), but does not mention the g7+. It also thanks Paul Collier and Donata Garrassi, among other experts, for the insights provided. The developments related to these issues will need to be observed in the near future.
[91] Interview with Betty Maina.
[92] Interview with Habib Ur Rehman Mayar.

countries facing most internal resistance to the label in their governments. The reasons for that are beyond the scope of this research, but it is important to highlight that yet, these governments still use the label in certain documents, such as South Sudan's own Fragility Assessment, and the *Note on Fragility Spectrum*, produced after meetings in DRC.[93]

As the symbolic power of the classification gains increasing complicity through self-assessments and self-labelling exercises, it seems the price of re-disengagement (after engagement) is even higher than before the existence of the g7+, as it now would involve breaking with an already existent platform, which in spite of its yet incipient successes is, nonetheless, a platform. The looping or theory effect that enabled the group to exist and consolidate now sets new layers to the price of disengagement. The success of the g7+'s self-classification enabled the creation of a quite known platform but have also trapped its members into advancing a label with which not all its representatives are necessarily comfortable.

3.2. MIXED FEELINGS: THE EXPERTS WHO ARE ALSO 'FRAGILE'

As this looping effect intensifies, however, there is another crucial impact that needs to be analysed. As the group's identity becomes stronger, some quantifying experts seem to be drawn to their own national identity in terms of how their countries of origin would fit into the g7+'s grouping of 'fragile states'. As it happens, quantifying experts in donors agencies who are nationals from 'fragile states' often seem to confuse their own roles, split between their nationality and their employer. This is in itself powerfully illustrative of the double game discussed before, of the way the label and the group become a political truth and of the symbolic power in these dynamics of description and prescription.

> Well, they know they have problems, they want to get out of it. It's like alcoholism, you first have to admit. What should *they* call themselves? They are trying to say that, because *they* are X, *we* have unique problems that need special solution. *We* are not like others. *We* need a special name, special categories, because we need more resources and customised solutions. There is a purpose in coming together as a community. First, for privileges… But *we* are not saying *we* are all the same, that's why each is doing their own Fragility Assessment. People are always stronger when they come together, that's why the EU got together.[94]

[93] Republic of South Sudan 2012; g7+ 2013.
[94] Interview with Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu.

Interestingly, Agborsangaya-Fiteu, from the quote above, used 'they' and 'we' interchangeably; the 'we' was not direct voice in a pretended dialogue. She previously worked for the Fragile States Unit of the WBI and is currently a senior officer at the CCSD. With degrees in Political Science obtained at Georgia State University, she has also worked for the Freedom House and The Carter Center. In addition, she is proud of having been engaged with the g7+ since its inception, when, as seen, the group is said to have requested help from the WBI, *and* most telling, she is a Cameroonian citizen, which might explain at least part of the 'we'.[95] At the same time, her view is also very complimentary towards what she perceives to be the group's *ownership* of the Fragility Assessments.

> You know what is different? It's that they are doing it themselves, that is what is important![96]

The way the 'they' and 'we' come to the fore and back away is an eloquent illustration of how the making of the group is constantly and subtly negotiated, navigating prescription, description, engagement and disengagement. Moreover, as the cohesiveness of the group around one label gains strength, it is important to notice many among donors' staff find themselves ambiguously positioned, their 'double game' even more nuanced. The confusion between 'they' and 'we' in cases such as this can corroborate the grouping even further. However, the successes of an institutionalised group come at the cost of institutionalised expectations.

4. STRATEGIES ON NUMBERS: THE PRESSURES FOR AND RISKS OF OVER-QUANTIFICATION

As the g7+ plays the game, adopting the label and practicing the quantifying and classifying reasoning, the group is increasingly expected to show results as a group, while at the same time the enclosing of its members under one label leads to practical expectations as to how members should compare among themselves. By engaging, they gain some space to develop their own measures and targets, and much importantly, financial and technical support for this; nevertheless, by

[95] She previously wrote an article about Cameroon's descent into 'state failure'. See Agborsangaya-Fiteu [2011]. See also World Bank, 'Participant Biographies'.
[96] Ibid.

engaging, the symbolic power in the agenda reaches its most efficient point, when it becomes implacable by being practiced through the simple order of things.[97]

In the following, I analyse how these expectations play out in terms of the quantifying reasoning in the agenda and how over-quantification can illustrate one important realm where efforts to shape the changes to come encounter each other.

4.1. 'WE ARE JUST HUMANS': STORYTELLING AND THE BURDEN OF QUANTIFICATION

Engagement in the game involves practically measuring just how much to concede to the style of thinking & doing – how much complicity, how much heresy.

The g7+ representatives clearly struggle to have just the right amount of quantification, participating in the race for numbers but also somehow working to keep alive what they consider that cannot or should not be measured. Permeating this section is, thus, a discussion around the expansion of the agenda over non-quantifying methods – what does all that imply for stories without numbers and things that cannot be measured? Meanwhile, quantifying experts seem keen to push the g7+ in the direction of further quantification, side-lining unquantifiable forms of knowledge that g7+ representatives, in an obviously privileged relationship with their own history and culture, might be able and willing to bring to the fore instead.

THE ATTEMPT AT STORYTELLING

I believe nothing portrays the g7+'s reaction to the threat of over-quantification better than the Q&A session of the meeting organised by the group as part of the 2013 UN General Assembly. The representatives speaking for the group in the meeting received in general many questions regarding how well placed the *New Deal* components are to provide quantified insights into 'state fragility'. Nevertheless, the g7+ representatives repeatedly answered to such questions with general

[97] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992ap. 143. 'De toute les formes de "persuasion clandestine", la plus implacable est celle qui est exercée tout simplement par l'ordre des choses.'

narratives based on local stories and examples. For the unique dynamic in that meeting, I quote my transcript of this episode at length.

> D1: The quality of these compacts will very much speak to all of us in the rest of the world as to how serious you are – if they have targets, if they have monitoring systems associated with them that can be measured, if they have some high aspirations for both international partners to behave differently and for countries to improve governance and absolutely respect human rights and governance priorities. Then they will be seen as real vehicles. Much additional investment may be done in the pursuit of ending extreme poverty. If they don't, then I'm afraid many will look at this effort as a very good effort but one that will take many, many more years to get the credibility that will allow for more investment. So the question I'd ask is: Do you believe, as we construct these compacts and the New Deal goes forward, that they can be tangible, specific, have targets, for poverty reduction, for kids in school, for MDGs outcomes, and have a very robust and shared monitoring platform, so in the future we can say 'ok,, because we did that, these are the results we achieved'?
>
> g7+.1: We believe the results are very important but to get to the results, first we need to know what the problem is. This is why we came up with the FOCUS and the TRUST elements of the New Deal. And the first step is the fragility – or some like to call it vulnerability or resilience – assessment. This is important. Because sometimes these assessments are done about us and we know nothing about it – we don't know what the disease is, so how can we fix it? That's very important. Recently, I was sitting in an IEG evaluation of the World Bank for the last 10 years, and the World Bank itself recognised this, and I said to them 'at least now, we have 18 countries that are willing, open to do this Fragility Assessment.' There is no shame in it, we don't think that because we are in problem [sic], that we brought us to it, and that we are weak not because we want to be weak, it's circumstances. Do pay attention to the details, do try to understand problems that countries face, don't just jump to the conclusions. We need to think outside the box, and more, try to step on someone else's shoes. We had some advisers years ago and they said electricity was not sustainable. I said 'take his passport, put him in a small village in the middle of nowhere and let him feel on his skin how it is!'
>
> D1: But my question was more on the compact, a plea to push ourselves beyond our comfort zones and be more specific about what we can achieve together. We have seen it happen in certain settings, but if we make it institutional, then I believe we will see much more finance flow through these countries, because this is where the fight against poverty will be either won or lost.
>
> g7+.2: We discussed with USAID: The food we eat comes from Uganda, and we have the World Food Program there. But we believe if they built a road instead of bringing things from Canada, I don't know, it would be much easier – the prices would go down, the hungry would have something to eat. Now, because of that cooperation between donors and the ownership of the problem, they gave the go ahead and we have this wonderful road, and it works. I hope you will give us more money to extend the road. On the issues of human rights, because there were problems with that road, the LRA was causing problems, we touched bases again and asked very fast motorcycles for our policemen to help monitor the road, and now there is a continuing patrolling of the road. It is a successful step of the New Deal. Give us more money and we go ahead and do it.

D2: If you look at the Afghanistan's mutual accountability document and the Somalia compact, with its annexes and details, there is a lot of focus on resources and deliverables, and how we should get there. They are quite strong contracts in that sense. And then the obligation turn to us, because as partner countries, we are far from living up to the aspirations in these contracts as well, in terms of delivering on budgets, delivering through systems, in national institutions, and let it show that the ownership and leadership are there. We must turn this into a positive circle... deliverables, yes, and partner countries also showing trust and using national systems.

D3: Good that 18 countries accepted to take part. We are taking stock of the MDGs here, so how can we use this to make sure the MDGs will be met and that then we should have a special view on fragile states? Because none of the fragile states have reached any of the MDGs. We were hosting one of the thematic consultations of the pot-2015 precisely on conflict and disaster and for us this is a very dear task to make sure that peace and security will be finally included in the new goals with very specific indicators, so that it can be measured and results can be delivered.

g7+.1: Just to remember that we are dealing with people. Our governments are people. They [donors] walk in as if you can control everybody, as if we are homogeneous, as if we are… We are people; we have our own conflicts inside. If the national government need to show some win-win, that means someone has to support this, otherwise they will lose credibility in the eyes of people. I consider myself as donor, because I am the Finance Minister, not the Foreign Affairs Minister, although some people think I am... At the Ministry of Finance, we are afraid of disbursing money just like that. We have to buy time... sometimes you have to divert... At my ministry, for example, I have no systems in place... and procurements were giving me a headache, because I had people saying 'hey, I defended the country, now you come here with your beautiful Western ideas and put all these systems... I don't know how to read and write and you don't give me any projects. On top of that, it is my money', they would say. Then if you don't have the political tools to fight back... I gave the procurements to my prime-minister and the donors said 'you can't do that, you're the Finance Minister, you have to have the procurement rule on you'. I said 'no, he has the political leverage; he is allowing me to set up systems quickly'. Now I have set up the systems, now I can take it back. I needed time. All these combinations, you need to understand. The understanding is very important... we are just normal human beings.[98]

In this meeting, there was a clear pressure from most donors over g7+ representatives to offer at least examples of how the *New Deal* could answer to the agenda's need for quantifiable indicators and measurable means of monitoring their progress. Donors D1 and D3 were clear in that demand. The pressure was particularly strong when the discussion focused on the possibility of adding security goals to the post-2015 agenda. As seen in chapter three, the pressures for security and development to be finally measured in the same set of post-2015 goals have been mounting as the

[98] 2013 UN General Assembly, g7+ parallel meeting with donors. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules. 'D' stands for 'donor'.

quantifying and classifying reasoning and the 'fragile states' agenda merged. Nonetheless, the debates are nothing like settled yet. As the g7+ representatives embrace quantification and classification, they are expected to present a more detailed numerical system to measure security, but the fact is that they have managed to at least have a place at the tables where this debate is unfolding.

In the meeting transcribed above, g7+ representatives repeatedly answered with *stories* to the admonitions to offer a M&E system for security, as one can gather from statements by g7+.1 and g7+.2. This was so palpable for those watching the exchanges that D2 seemly came to the rescue, apparently attempting to bridge questions and answers by suggesting there was much to grasp from the stories g7+ representatives were telling but at the same time bringing the discussion back to compacts and measures.

The g7+ stories illustrated aspects of 'state fragility' that seemed to them better described in non-quantified ways, which gave the impression of a rebuke or at least an indirect argument against over-reliance on numbers. Following the theoretical discussion in chapter two, it is pointless to try to guess why, individually and internally, they decided this was the best way to answer donors' questions. Nonetheless, the episode seems to denote a clear divergence on the way ahead for the political management of 'fragile states'. The fact is that many questions regarding specific indicators remained unanswered, even in the face of obvious financial baits, as D1 and D3 were clearly offering.[99] The quote below from D4 is even clearer in this aspect.

> D4: Somalia had a very helpful compact, with indicators. They have a very complicated situation there. We have 200 million euros a year to spend. We have a facility for financing, but it won't work if there is not security. If you don't include state building, peacebuilding, security [indicators], I can't use these 200 million, and there is a chance this money will be wasted, or there is a risk of that.[100]

Facing such apparent opportunities, the evasiveness of the answers by the g7+ representatives was privately said to be frustrating by some in

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

the audience that were actually hoping to see the g7+ advancing further in its agenda. A representative from a civil society platform eloquently stated:

> The meeting was an opportunity, but they [g7+] didn't manage it well. The US government, for instance, has already sent different guys to talk to them. This time they sent another one. He was clearly saying they believe in the security goals to a certain extent. He was asking questions… They didn't answer. It should have been a wake-up call: 'There is not much result'. But it's ok, the US is aware of that. The result in post-conflict situations is actually a process. But they didn't show much of this process either. They could have talked about the compacts, about the dialogue in Somalia, they have already gone beyond the Fragility Assessments. They don't know how to say and people think they're doing nothing.[101]

If even when important resources are at stake, and even after so much effort to develop and implement the Fragility Assessment with all its measurable indicators and targets, scenes like these still occur, important questions need to be raised regarding just how comfortable g7+ governments are with their role in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states'. On the one hand, they are supposed to now measure themselves, using country systems and national statistics as much as possible, with a Fragility Spectrum that is expected to both take into account each country's point of departure *and* establish 'realistic' goals for each national context.[102] On the other hand, their embracing of some of the rules of the game creates the expectation that the quantifying and classifying reasoning will be extended to all areas of development *and* security, accompanied by tools to constantly monitor and evaluate progress. As the group juggles prescription and description, it creates important opportunities for engagement, but its members are also faced with the high costs of expectations related to this engagement. Indeed, it is clear how expectations and generalisations are intrinsically connected and how heavy their weight is in making the group they describe. After all, the unmet expectations can subtly reinforce the idea of 'incapacity' associated with 'state fragility'. The statements of the kind 'it is a nice effort, but…' well reflect that point.

[101] Interview with Paul Okumu.
[102] This is, of course, something that will need to be evaluated in the near future.

Nevertheless, central here is also how subtly the game was played in the meeting quoted above in terms of the role for the quantifying experts. Now that the quantifying and classifying reasoning has expanded to the point of co-opting 'fragile states' themselves, now that it is so central in this agenda, quantifying experts (in this case, official ones) are caught in their own demands for data: 'Please, give me indicators, so we can allocate our funding' ('if you want some of it' hanging in the air). The more quantification and classification are practiced as 'objective and impartial' forms of political decision-making, the more they strike back, requiring from experts further coherence in their game.

> D5: Statebuilding is essential for peacebuilding, a social contract. We are still risk-averse. I go to my parliament, if I ask more money from the government on budget to Afghanistan, they look at me as if I am crazy… They say I take too high a risk. I persuade them by saying, first of all, we will do the fragility assessment.[103]

Quantification and classification were made guarantees of good use of money, so they became also necessities, held to their own success, even when practiced through the mechanisms of the g7+.

Also important is the fact that by providing indicators on security that can be advanced in the context of the UN, in the case of the discussion in the transcript above, the g7+ would seemly furnish donors with the tools to advance security indicators further in the post-2015 agenda, by providing the authority of the least favoured, hence, reinforcing the impression that this is an universal project.[104]

> D5: Of course, there is a lot of big scale scepticism, people who think 'security is our issue, keep away from it'. There is still a lot of compartmentalisation, we are thinking in silos, people who want to grab the agenda, protect, 'security is for us, development is here'. We need to break down these silos, and the only way to do so is to bring these stories from the ground and see what works and how it

[103] 2013 UN General Assembly, g7+ parallel meeting with donors. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules.

[104] The discussion on security here is limited to the specific intersection between quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda, thus, I focus on indicators in the context of the g7+ proposals. For overviews on which groups have what stances on security and the post-2015 agenda in the context of the UN, see Wyeth 2012 and Denney August 2012.

works. The compacts are making this case well.[105]

The compacts, as seen, being the g7+'s Mutual Accountability Framework or the *New Deal* compacts, it is striking to see how much donors count on g7+ 'contextual' quantifications to be able to 'break down the silos' of security and development, by expanding the reasoning even further and, thus, inserting security indicators in the post-2015 agenda.

The risk for the g7+ is in being easily co-opted by the much broader and intense political agenda in the UN context. What the group has attempted so far is to match this agenda on the post-2015 goals with its proposition that indicators to monitor any progress be above all contextual, the country-specific realities playing a bigger role than common indicators could possibly depict, as the storytelling in the UN meeting was perhaps practically attempting to advocate.

5. LABELS, INDICATORS AND THE NEW YORK BUBBLE

I suggest in this section that as the g7+ as a group of 'fragile states' increasingly becomes more of a group, the least comfortable other groups are with its existence and the more aware its members themselves are of the label they are putting forward. These points are important for my argument on symbolic power in at least two ways. They reflect the power in the agenda by drawing attention to the fact that, even with some internal dissidence that is very much centred on the label, the self-labelling cannot just be radically changed or interrupted now that the game is being played. It also reflects the ways in which the symbolic power in the agenda holds its very possibilities of weakening and change, after all, the external antagonism is in fact very much a reflection of the successes of the group, whose existence as such came to bother some externals only when it was strong enough to make some room for itself, for which self-labelling was fundamental. Moreover, these examples lead to questioning the common-sense assumption that technicality averts politics. It is rather an issue of understanding what technicality does to the possibilities of engaging *politicians*.

[105] Ibid.

The fact that the g7+ agenda is very much contained in Finance Ministries is seen by some as a crucial obstacle for the group to overcome in order to mould the changes to come. The internal cohesion and buy-in of the g7+'s agenda is at stake, but not only. Many also argue that the g7+ now needs to find its way through to reach politics in the New York bubble.

> They had a problem bringing the message to politicians. It still remains a very technical agenda in these ministries. But it is political; they need to move the agenda upwards.[106]

Both internal and external challenges, therefore, seem centred on the ability of the g7+ representatives to recruit other ministries in their government, beyond the Finance Ministry, effectively mobilising politicians. The New York bubble, it is said, cannot be punctured unless the g7+ gets its agenda passed by the political obstacles involved with the label adopted and its attempt to have security goals – the PSGs – included in the post-2015 agenda. Although the image of such obstacles seems discouraging, it is also a sign that the g7+ reached a certain level of access to the table to the extent that it cannot at least be ignored. The g7+'s adoption of the label and of the quantifying and classifying practices towards 'fragile states' might act in complicity to reinforce the symbolic power in the political truth of 'state fragility'. However and crucially, in doing so, it also helps to produce and reproduce a divide between the g7+ and 'other developing countries', making it a practical necessity that the latter's representatives acknowledge the g7+ – again, for good and for worse. In this acknowledgment, there is a possibility the g7+ may need to work in two fronts, winning over donors and 'other developing countries'.

> The g7+ moderates its language depending on which international organisation it is talking to. In the World Bank, the word 'fragile state' is a very accepted term which describes a certain type of country and its relationship with the Bank. Within the UN, the word is much more contentious, so when we are writing and advocating within the context of New York we probably use different language. We won't use 'fragile states'…more 'conflict-affected and post-conflict'.[107]

[106] Interview with Betty Maina.
[107] Interview with Claire Leigh.

There are important reasons why the label and the group itself are contentious in the context of the UN: The g77, currently representing 133 'developing countries' in the UN,[108] sees the group as a form of 'divide-and-conquer' initiative; moreover, many seem to consider the g7+ a OECD- or donor-led project, a suspicion that is strengthened by the use of the 'fragile state' label; and finally, the PSGs are also unwelcome and perceived by some of 'the other developing countries' as an attempt to securitise development or to at least divert attention from important economic issues.[109] The last point has been intensely debated in the context of the High Level panel formed to think the post-2015 agenda, and it was also debated in the parallel meeting organised by the g7+ as part of the 2013 UN General Assembly.

> g7+.3: The business of the UN is peace, it is about development, and human rights, and they have never been more needed today to really see and make sure we give everyone this opportunity. In the New York bubble, we are distanced from this but opportunities like this, we cannot forsake, we have to execute the Charter.
>
> D4: It is hard to imagine someone would object to incorporating peace and security to this agenda. [g7+.3] mentioned the New York bubble. I want to ask what it takes to bust that bubble and get peace and security to the negotiation. Do you feel confident about it? Do you feel we are winning? What can we do to support that campaign?
>
> g7+.1: I just cannot understand why would someone object. My country is the classical example. If we hadn't fought for peace, we would never be where we are. We had thousands of refugees. We had to address the security and instability first. I don't understand, but we need to convince them... Maybe they have been living in this bubble for too long.
>
> g7+.2: No doubt we are puncturing that bubble right now. Peace and stability have a meaning. Before the peace process, 200 thousands kids went to school. After that, more than a million. This is peace and security. That is why peace is at the heart of sustainable development, because we have seen it.[110]

Again, the question regarding the possible introduction of security goals in the post-2015 agenda was answered somewhat with storytelling,

[108] See g77, 'About the group of g77'.
[109] See International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) 6-7 June 2011; Wyeth 2012.
[110] My transcript of the September 2013 g7+ parallel meeting organized as part of the Un General Assembly. Anonymity protected under Chatham House rules.

but beyond this, one point comes to the fore: The donors such as D4, who have engaged with this proposition and supported the PSGs, now count on the g7+, as an authoritative representative of the 'fragile states', to help advance the agenda in the UN. This can be seen as a sign that the g7+ has managed to make important wins through engagement, but this has come with the expectation that the group will provide some kind of strategy founded in solid indicators, which the vagueness and consternation of the storytelling seem to evade. Moreover, such expectation by donors has led 'other developing countries' to see the g7+ with suspicious eyes, most felt by those working directly with the UN politics.

> We need to dispel the idea that this group is led by donor agenda. Sometimes I ask donors not to support us so much because it leaves me to dispel this feeling. We need a supportive mechanism in New York. We are talking to the UN about it. We have to make sure the person follows out mandate. We are very short-staffed and, to be honest, that's what I have been doing mostly, focusing on this agenda. The way the group came about is not very helpful either. We need to distance ourselves constantly. We need to be in partnership, there is no way other than two-way conversation; however the choice of language is crucial. The language raises a lot of suspicion from the g77. We also have to show the group is very diverse, rich in different experiences. There is also this perception in the g77 that there is an attempt to break the group into subgroups. We have explained the problem is not about more money but to be more effective. We want to be more efficient and we want to have a voice. This agenda has been hugely driven by Finance Ministers, and Foreign Ministries have not been involved. We are in a situation where ambassadors want to help but are not in a position to help because they have no orders from above, as Foreign Ministers are not in the loop. The pressure on the g7+ is enormous, so any ambassador in London, New York... needs strong mandates.[111]

The statement above was given by a key ambassador of a g7+ member state to the UN in the context of the June 2013 OECD-INCAF ministerial meetings. On the one hand it reflects the considerable achievement of the g7+ in being noticed and weighted by the g77, with its 60 years of experience and 133 members, besides having its PSGs discussed, on one way or another, in terms of the future of the MDGs. On the other hand, the tensions in the context of the UN are clear and represent a considerable obstacle. At lunchtime during the same OECD-INCAF ministerial meetings, the overall challenge to the g7+ was indeed said to be in the possibility of having ambassadors with full mandate to

[111] Ibid.

work the politics out in the UN.[112] In fact, the challenge of advancing the PSGs as a whole and mainly in the context of the UN 'bubble' had been discussed as early as 2011 in the form of a four-points 'political strategy to secure international acceptance of the PSGs':

> • The PSGs are seen by some as an OECD-led initiative, and the BRICS and emerging economies may in particular be wary for this reason.
> • The G77 sees itself as the sole legitimate voice of developing countries at the UN, and therefore some G77 members may feel threatened or confused by the g7+. Likewise the LDC [Least Developed Countries].
> • Fragile countries that are not g7+ members may be nervous of any agenda that may apply to them, or could reject references to 'fragility' altogether, due to concerns over sovereignty and opening the door to external interventions.
> • Finally the UN structure divides institutions broadly into those focusing on either development or security. As the PSGs cover both, they fall awkwardly between and across the two major silos of the UN.[113]

At that point, one of the main recommendations was for 'g7+ members to ask their foreign ministries to issue formal instructions to their embassies in New York to take forward the g7+ agenda.'[114] Since then, these issues have developed rather slowly, with the g7+ representatives clearly wary of taking too big steps in the context of the UN. The group considered trying to get a resolution approved in the 2012 UN General Assembly but this was postponed, apparently indefinitely. In 2013, the g7+ still did not pursuit this path, but decided to invest in the parallel meeting that I was able to observe.[115] Minister Emília Pires, however, is one of the members of the High Level Panel on the post-2015 agenda, an institution said to reflect the UN Secretary General's agenda to advance security further in the future goals.[116]

What becomes clear is that to advance in the political realm of the UN, the g7+ needs to at least simultaneously make political advances internally as well, to acquire the support of its politicians. In an internal confidential report concerning OECD-INCAF meetings held in April 2014, the author, not a representative from any donor government, states that it is

[112] INCAF High-Level Ministerial Meetings, 2013. Anonymous under Chatham House Rules.
[113] International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) 6-7 June 2011, pp. 4-5.
[114] Ibid., p. 5.
[115] Ibid. See also Denney August 2012.
[116] Denney August 2012. The Secretary General Bank Ki-Moon was present, for instance, in the presentation of the Timorese Fragility Assessment. See Timor-Leste Government 26 Feb 2013.

still vital for the g7+ to involve other ministries beyond Finance. However, this is coupled with a diagnostic that donors in OECD-INCAF are also trapped in that they have not managed to 'get the legislature in their countries to allow the flexibility needed for governments' aid agencies to make the decisions they need.'[117] It seems that, without seeing compromise from donors' governments in the form of more political commitments, the g7+ itself has also failed so far to take its agenda beyond Finance Ministers. Moreover, with all such obstacles, the attempt by the g7+ and some donors to advance the PSGs in the context of the UN has also been facing many challenges.

The specific goals of the g77 or the internal debates of the UN are beyond the scope of this research, but the facts above help to illustrate what kind of external antagonisms the g7+ has been facing as a reflection of its own successes in at least making some of the points in its agenda known.[118]

5.3. SHATTERING AND REBUILDING COMMON SENSE

Indeed, as the symbolic power in the agenda led disengagement to imply too high a cost, nothing was guaranteed in terms of successes or failure once engagement and complicity took place. It is a fact that self-labelling encloses the group, consecrating the political truth of 'state fragility', while at the same time powerfully creating the group from which a platform can first take form.[119] It is not, however, a given the kind of balance to take shape between engagement and disengagement. In fact, the dynamic nature of such balance is precisely what makes it political: 'The heretical discourse', which Bourdieu suggests starts with and necessitate a political subversion, 'needs not only to contribute to shatter de adherence of the world to the common sense in publicly manifesting the rupture with the ordinary order, but also to produce a new common sense and make it penetrate.'[120] Hence, in between shattering and building common sense,

[117] Anonymous 2014.
[118] Indeed, an ODI report places the g7+'s agenda among the five main positions regarding the post-2015 goals. See Denney August 2012.
[119] Bourdieu 2005.
[120] Bourdieu 2001a, p. 189. My translation: 'Le discours hérétique doit non seulement contribuer à briser l'adhésion au monde du sens commun en professant publiquement la

the balance of engagement and disengagement is dynamic and, in being so, political; it involves the constant negotiation around what contours the changing common sense is to take. The issue is then how to make these contours to be established and hold in a favourable way. In the case of the 'fragile states' agenda, I suggest the achievements of the g7+ are precisely due to its ability to embrace the quantifying and classifying reasoning in the agenda and to enable a powerful grouping; nevertheless, its further ability to mould common sense seems limited and attached to the possibility of advancing its agenda to the other tiers in the game, encompassing also politicians from ministries beyond Finance and Economic Development, and thus encouraging its own inclusion in crucial political debates in international tables.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: POLITICIANS AND TECHNOCRATS

To speak of symbolic power in the classification of 'fragile states' is to discuss the impacts of a style of thinking & doing that subtly imposes itself through the practicality of numbers, statistical analysis, indicators and all the simplified visual resources they generate. If symbolic power is in the authority of practices and tools that exert important influence without seeming to dominate, the long-date, deep-seated and well-established statistical reasoning that permeates the development agenda is a powerful ally. Moreover, if symbolic power is marked by the complicity of those who seem least favoured by it, in the case of the g7+, self-labelling and self-quantification are telling forms of corroboration.

Nevertheless, the notion of symbolic power is mainly and fundamentally about the relational, subtle and mutually influential pressures in the game: While the g7+ embraces quantification and classification, it is able to play the game, but it also faces the pressures of accompanying expectations, pushed to emphasise commonalities, to develop security indicators that can be advanced in the context of the post-2015 agenda and to propose more forms of measuring the progress of its own PSGs. Donors, on the other hand, have had to compete for the production of data in the agenda they themselves have contributed to make increasingly quantified.

rupture avec l'ordre ordinaire, mais aussi produire un nouveau sens commun et y faire entrer.'

In this competition, quantifying experts of any background and affiliation can become players, precisely because quantification is a fluid capital. In addition, the competition is also dependent on the demands of users, hence, often relying on the requests of 'fragile states'. Finally, the symbolic power in the agenda has moved the g7+ forward, for good and for worse: The better it plays the game, the more involved it becomes with other realms of the agenda and the less sufficient its members' capitals, as other environments require different kinds of resources. In this sense, the g7+ has also been propelled to increase quantification, at the risk of losing the local un-measured stories its representatives have held dear so far. These are the same representatives who have been facing enormous pressures to engage politicians in ministries beyond Finance, to be able to extend the debate to the 'upper-tiers' at home, in donors' governments and at the UN, where the g7+ has faced antagonism from other groups of 'developing countries'.

On the other hand, I have sought to show how donors have struggled with the pressures they have helped to create by making numbers essential to make decisions on the 'fragile states', even relying on the g7+ members to produce some of these. Furthermore, they also now rely on the g7+ providing the legitimacy only the complicity of the least favoured can provide.

Therefore, the instances of symbolic power discussed in this chapter speak back to the view that technicality disguises politics and in fact empties development assistance from political struggle. Beyond the perhaps more obvious point that all such instances clearly offer political stories, it is important to point out that actors involved in these dynamics do not face politics blindfolded.

It is a common argument that the increasingly high technical level of discussions on 'state fragility' in general has de-politicised the debate on practices of development assistance. One hears of the 'technicist and apolitical nature of development discourse', the 'technicians of global governance', and the 'de-politicis[ation] of the debate on fragility'.[121] After having dedicated many pages to how this technicity came to be so central in the agenda, while at the same time arguing it composes important

[121] Duffield 2001, p. 92; Chandler 2006a, pp. 11, 164; Nay 2014 , p. 217.

aspects of the symbolic power in the classification of 'fragile states', I obviously do not discard politics but instead make a point of reminding the distinction between politics and politicians. As the critics above *criticise de*politicisation, they also obviously point to the fact that there exists politics in this dynamics, or it could not be said to be hidden at all. The issue is not that politics is replaced by technicality, since it is a central aspect of symbolic power, but that the successes of technicality, while leaving certain tools of influence to navigate away from producers, also tend to create a comfortable and practical form of (self-)alienating politicians.

Politics is not lost in the style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states', but politicians might be. It is not by chance that ministries of Foreign Affairs and the debates of highly political issues in the UN have been perceived to be beyond the reach of the g7+: The style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' through quantification and classification creates intermediate tiers of actors and practices to analyse and fix 'state fragility' and makes the figure of the decision-makers or the politicians more distant and fleeting, just as the numbers side-line local stories. To consider all this, however, a cynical form to affirm that politicians can still call the shots, any shots, *without* so much as an acknowledgement of what numbers say or by making numbers fit pre-established lines of decision, is to ignore the important paths open through the symbolic power discussed here. Quantification and classification practices might somehow facilitate the (self-)alienation of non-technocrats, but they also open the doors for a kind of engagement by 'fragile states' that might not exist otherwise. The fact that some obstacles exist to the implementation of the g7+ agenda should be seen as a mark of its achievement in producing such agenda and making it sufficiently known to be deterred.

As also said, however, as the g7+ plays the game, it also risks devaluing one of its key assets, its members' local knowledge and local stories, that is, that which can hardly be measured or at least whose highest value is not in the measures that they could generate. In one interview in 2012, Minister Emília Pires spoke of Timor-Leste's experiences:

> What did we do to become normal? I remember one, very small example: The prime-minister, in the middle of so many priorities, he wanted to do a garden…And he ordered to put in the swings for the little kids. And we thought: 'Prime-minister, we've got things to do, we've got no electricity, we've got no roads, and you want a garden for the little children?' And he goes, 'Yes, we need for the next generation to be brought up in a normal life. They need to know that there are swings to play with, there are gardens that you go to, that mothers and children can smell the roses and stuff like that – that is normal life.' And when the garden was ready, you should have seen – you know, people queue up for shops etc in other countries – children were queuing up to take a chance on the swings. They cried, they stayed until midnight, just to have the swings. And that's when I thought, that is normalization.[122]

Timorese representatives have always said that a key problem with statistics on their country was that they were inaccurate, outdated or simply did not reflect the relative successes in certain areas. The g7+ has also stated in various documents and occasions that the group wants to bring to the fore the 'true experts' on 'state fragility', their own citizens,[123] and to take into account each country's particular experience. The problem is that by playing the game of quantifying and classifying 'fragile states', un-measured and highly qualitatively local stories like the above, while richly telling of the peculiar circumstances and achievements of each country, might be increasingly pushed aside.

[122] Wyeth 23 April 2012. The swings are also mentioned by the wife of the then prime-minister Xanana Gusmão in a speech offered in Australia. She speaks of the transformation, two years after the 2006 crisis, of an area that used to be an IDP camp into a 'land-scaped playground.' See Gusmão 6 August 2009.
[123] See, for example, g7+ 2013, p. 2.

CONCLUSIONS

ACKNOWLEDGING PRACTICALITY, EMBRACING SUBTLETY

This research was much guided by an understanding that the 'fragile states' label is indeed powerful in the way it can impact aid allocation and political leverage. It was also led by a realisation that the way 'state fragility' is quantified carries important influences not only over aid allocation, but also over the internal politics and policies of 'fragile states', their government cohesion, citizens' perceptions and international negotiations. However, precisely because of these impacts, the path chosen was to analyse how classification and quantification are practiced, how they become authoritative and what influences they exert over diverse actors. Problem-solving approaches often take classification and quantification to senseless peaks of bureaucratic and schematic analysis, frequently feeding unnecessary poorly established statistical correlations to the highly impactful dynamics of aid and development assistance. Politically sceptics, on the other hand, can be as fervent prosecutors of the power relations in these dynamics as they are dismissive about what it takes to disengage completely and, most importantly, silent about how nuanced engagement can be. In this sense, this research was simultaneously aimed at understanding the impacts of these dynamics and the limitations of critiques that address them.

I followed the classifying and quantifying practices back and forth, to look at how quantifying and classifying practices directed at 'fragile states' became entrenched in the development agenda, what politics they enable

and what the g7+'s embracing of them has entailed so far. What this made possible was to open space to turn power into a question instead of an a-temporal given answer: I asked '*What practices classify "fragile states" and what are their impacts?*', and I approached this question without taking for granted what power is, who exerts it and how. By looking at quantification and classification in the form of monitoring, selection for aid, evaluation, advising, ranking and the basic practice of data collection, I suggested that practices that classify 'fragile states' are those able to reinforce the authority of the very quantifying and classifying reasoning permeating these dynamics. That includes not only direct practices of categorisation but, crucially, any practices able to construct 'fragile states' as measurable and manageable political truths. As such, these practices are largely impactful but importantly subtle, blurred and hardly traceable. Therefore, this research pointed at *a* style of thinking and doing political management of 'fragile states' that does not operate by imposition, but through practical sense and symbolic power instead.

1. STYLE OF THINKING AND DOING POLITICAL MANAGEMENT OF 'FRAGILE STATES': THE ENTRENCHMENT AND IMBRICATION OF STATISTICAL REASONING

In criticising what I called politically sceptical approaches to the topic of 'fragile states', I sought to emphasise the role of practicality in the way 'fragile states' took to self-labelling and self-measuring. By practicality I mean that there is a hugely successful history of statistical reasoning that permeates current policy-making and that has been especially impactful in the case of the 'fragile states' – so much so that disengagement away from quantification and its accompanying classifying practices became impractical. By combining the notion of a style of thinking & doing with the idea of practical sense, I aimed at highlighting how a statistical 'way of reasoning', as Hacking puts it, became entrenched in the 'fragile states' agenda. I also analysed how this reasoning is capable of self-authentication through the practicality of what 'works', that is, through circularly making methods and objects match each other, moulding simultaneously what is to be known and how this knowledge is to be formed.

The politically sceptical quest to dismiss or attempt to 'positively' substitute the label is only theoretically possible because it empirically sidelines the practical issue of *how* quantifying and classifying practices are entrenched and imbricated in the policy-making towards 'fragile states' – not that they *are*, but *how so*. Moreover, the politically sceptical quest also ignores how subtle these practices are, hence, how much difficult it is to counter them on the basis of allegations of direct imposition, and intrinsically related, how they become practical as paths towards participation, even if an unequal one.

When Lampland and Star use the term 'imbrication' to understand how standards are constructed, they mean exactly to evoke a 'picture of uncemented things producing a larger whole' in such a way that 'each part may shift in character over time as the whole is edited or rearranged.' Crucially, these uncemented parts are 'not stacks', but 'overlapping layers', like in ancient stone walls.[1] The initial layers of my own account – my 'whole' – were formed by the nineteenth-century epistemological, ethical, logical and philosophical successes of statistical reasoning.[2] I suggested these successes led to what I called the *metaphysics of correlation*, whereby knowledge is ever-perfectible, thus, imperfect data and analyses are accepted and even embraced, as long as errors and limits are duly measured.

The layers above these were slowly formed by the merge of this 'imperfect' quantifying and classifying reasoning with the 'fragile states' agenda. My brief historical sociology in chapter three and the subsequent discussion on quantifying and classifying practices in chapter four sought to show how a rationale of Measuring for Development Results (MfDR) increasingly became the basis of development assistance, embracing the metaphysics of correlation that allows for 'good enough' methods and results. All along, I sought to show the 'unusual transparency'[3] in the self-authentication of this style of thinking & doing, in the sense of visual access, and most recently, of *open* access or *open data*. The aim was to show how this transparency invoked increasing criticism from representatives of 'fragile states', regarding the data used, the practices of

[1] Lampland and Star 2009, p. 20.
[2] Hacking 1990, p. 4.
[3] Ibid., p. 144.

collection and analysis, the results achieved and the fixtures proposed based on these data and analyses. It was in this context that the g7+ was born, much influenced by the intense search for ownership of one of its founding countries, in the figure of the Timorese Finance Ministry. I suggested the 'transparency' of the statistical analyses that classify 'fragile states' makes it all so tempting to representatives of 'fragile states' to engage and to attempt to reform quantifying and classifying practices; moreover, it makes it too impractical to *dis*engage, as statistical reasoning is at the very basis of every report, strategy, solution and monitoring proposed and applied. To disengage would reinforce the image of incapacity and/or unwillingness of 'fragile states' without making these practices any weaker. One does not *refute* a *label*, but the style of thinking & doing in which it is based. The power in this *im*practicality is clear through this push to engage, but it is also clearly subtle and nuanced, imbricated in the routine of bureaucracy.

2. PRACTICAL SENSE: GOOD ENOUGH METHODS FOR GOOD ENOUGH RESULTS

I suggested this routine of bureaucracy is as much an attempt to respond to the changing contexts of 'fragile states' as it helps to compose these contexts themselves, in ontological complicity.[4] The practical sense is in the anticipation of the potentialities of the game and in the practices that engage with these anticipated realities, thus, constructing and constantly moulding the game itself.[5] At the centre of this understanding is the dismissal of rationality and of the notion that such practices are programmatic, answering to a collective intention. Thus, I aimed to depict practices in their blurred unfolding and the caveats of their impacts, showing the impossibility of neatly connecting intentions with specific 'results'. In fact, numbers, in their independent wandering, defy this clear-cut approach to politics, making it generally impossible to trace authorship.[6]

In the 'fragile states' agenda, the World Bank's and OECD's quantification and classification practices, for example, have increasingly

[4] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 20.
[5] Bourdieu 2008b, ch. 5.
[6] See Rocha de Siqueira 2014.

adopted a 'fit-for-purpose' approach to data and related policies that is hardly institutionalised; it is instead rather messy and made flexible through practical sense. Actors in the field constantly attempt to adapt such practices, as in the case of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), to the constrained contexts related to crisis and poverty, both responding to and creating multiple standards. Good enough data becomes acceptable to understand and develop fit-for-purpose institutions, which will then contribute to establish good enough governance in 'fragile states'. As practices of data collection, analysis and intervention adapt to volatile contexts, they also create diverse acceptable standards of what is efficient and good in and for 'fragile states'. I suggested the g7+ has somehow embraced this 'good enough' reasoning, albeit with different propositions. It proposes, for instance, that data for the self-assessments of its member countries will be preferably as good as its offices can produce them without resorting so much to international institutions. The group also counts with external advisors to evaluate these possibilities. That way, the g7+ member governments practically limit what they *can* measure, inevitably fixing a bar and helping to compose 'state fragility' as a political truth.

Crucially, therefore, this *niche standardisation*,[7] coming from different directions, is full of negative potential for 'fragile states', considering the lower bar in which they operate, but it also attends to the requests of 'fragile states'' representatives for differentiated methods that would take into account the peculiarities of each country. In fact, the g7+'s Fragility Assessment and Spectrum are based on an understanding that statistical analyses of progress need to take into account the different points of departure of countries, the relative successes considering the level of 'difficulty' faced in each context, the diverse priorities in each country and the local perception of success. With these tools, the g7+ seemly defies the expectations of political sceptics, by not only embracing the label of 'fragile states' but also by adopting some of the methods that enable this label and its impacts.

However, by engaging, the g7+ has also advanced a somewhat different agenda, advocating more experience-focused assessments, that is, analyses based on the experience of each 'fragile state' and how this

[7] Epstein 2007, ch. 7.

experience is perceived. It suggests 'fragile states' in the same level of the Spectrum, for instance, should be understood to be *qualitatively* different in their experiences.[8]

Having discussed the practical pressures for engagement, the idea with this discussion was to analyse how engagement is in fact taking place. Indeed, to turn power into a question requires understanding what is involved in the complicity of the g7+ with the quantification and classification of 'fragile states'.

3. UNBALANCED SKILLS: CAPACITY, EXPERTISE AND TRAPS

A research that proposes to combine the structural constructivism of Bourdieu with the dynamic nominalism of Hacking, however, cannot focus on practices alone. What classifies 'fragile states' is not the practic*ing* of monitoring, evaluation, data collection and so on, but the thinking and doing of which these practices are part. Thus, this research also looked at the skills and resources necessary for these practices to take place and at what makes it possible for actors to occupy different positions around these practices. Moreover, by looking at these skills and resources, it becomes possible to analyse the nuances in the game.

The increasing statistical expertise associated with the 'fragile states' agenda enables a deeply unequal relation, considering the conditions of most offices in 'fragile states' in terms of material resources and skilled staff. However, this expertise is also extremely fluid: It navigates more easily than perhaps other forms of capital, as it can often involve training offered by only a few professionals, can be much based on the automatism of software, and it can also be offered by independent researchers and consultants. Therefore, statistical expertise has expanded the scope of professionals seen as able to engage with the 'fragile states' agenda in terms of supporting development policies, and it has singled out in the offices of 'fragile states' those few professionals who can more easily work with such methods.

Hence, the 'fragile states' agenda I look at, merged with a quantifying and classifying reasoning, includes actors beyond the usual

[8] g7+ 2013.

'poverty-oriented' departments (now also 'conflict-oriented', at least officially), to encompass in the case of the World Bank, for instance, the Data sector, WBG Information and Technology Solutions and the World Bank Institute (with a focus on learning). In the g7+, in turn, actors involved often work for the Finance Ministries of member countries and have experience of studying and working in Western countries and/or for Western institutions. Those are the central tiers of the game and the focus of this research. These central tiers are occupied by those with considerable knowledge of statistics and the practices that accompany them.

Precisely, one crucial aim of this discussion over skills and technical resources was to bring in the nuances of the game, to avoid taking for granted *what* power is, *who* exerts it and *how*. Opening space for blurs and nuances sheds light on striking ironies. The peculiar relation producers/users developed along statistical practices was an eloquent example. Most professionals dealing with 'fragile states' have to be experts on all the 'correlates of fragility' and on the calculation of these correlates, 'uncovering' causes and predicting results. This means that statistical reasoning becomes the very bar with which experts are measured, and in this sense, it composes 'state fragility' as much as it helps to compose donor experts themselves. Most importantly, however, these compositions are always relational and mutually influential. Indeed, one fundamental aspect of statistics is that they need to be used and be perceived as useful, even more so when an increasing number of experts can offer the same products. Hence, users, that is, the very offices in 'fragile states' that often do not hold such resources, can have important roles in the pressures generated over donor agencies' staff. I called these pressures *traps of effectiveness*, and I sought to draw attention to their potential to enable change and to somehow weaken the symbolic power in the game. This is only a potential impact, however, to the extent that 'fragile states'' governments in the g7+ are able to continue playing the game. In order to request expertise, they also need to corroborate quantification and classification, becoming accomplices in the composition of 'state fragility'. Such nuances invoke symbolic power.

4. SYMBOLIC POWER, GROUPING AND GROUP EXPECTATIONS: BALANCING ENGAGEMENT AND DISENGAGEMENT

If one takes into account the foundation of the g7+, its self-labelling and self-measuring, questions come to the fore as to the context in which such practices, normally perceived as oppressively Western, came to be adopted. I argued that to dismiss the engagement of the g7+ and/or to simply ignore it while one advocates the dismissal of the 'fragile states' label is to paradoxically silence the very forces of change critical approaches are supposed to encourage. Looking at these forces, on the other hand, means to draw attention to the impacts of quantifying and classifying practices and to the accompanying crucial blurriness of the relations in the 'fragile states' agenda.

The relational character of the quantifying and classifying practices discussed here makes of 'classifiers'/'classified' a flawed opposition. The notion of symbolic power instead is fundamentally related to the way engagement and disengagement are in a constant, dynamic, practical and political balanc*ing*, to the extent that no position is definitely demarcated. At the bottom of this balancing, the idea of symbolic power highlights the subtle but authoritative influence of quantifying and classifying practices in keeping the costs of disengagement too high for it to be practically envisaged. Indeed, including contributions of sociologies of quantification allowed me to look into how quantifying practices establish and constant monitor their own authority, becoming themselves gatekeepers in the classification of 'fragile states'. Crucially, these contributions highlight the fact that experts are usually much aware of the fact that numbers are not perfect and cannot be, but instead have authority in their apparently paradoxical constant search for improvement, most importantly, improvement *in use*. The practical sense in this 'imperfect use' makes of quantification and its accompanying classification powerful but subtle practices.

> Taxonomy is, in a way, the obscure side of both scientific and political work. But the study of taxonomy cannot be reduced to the unveiling of hidden relationships between these two dimensions of knowledge and action – as is sometimes the case in a sociological criticism of science, which swings directly from a purely internalist position in terms of power relationships and social control. The question, rather, is to study in detail the nature of the bonds that make the whole of things and people hold

> together – which in fact precludes the opposition between analyses described as technical or social.[9]

I suggested the authority of (technical) statistical reasoning has been crucial in advancing the symbolic power of highly impactful quantifying and classifying practices, to the point of achieving the complicity of those perceived as least favoured by it. Meanwhile, the indirect, nuanced and mutually influential form with which these practices take place makes symbolic power able to guarantee its reproduction through the subtlety of the order of things. I argued such nuances are extremely relevant to consider the possibilities for change and weakening of this power. To ignore this subtlety is to ignore precisely how symbolic power carries its weak points within.

In that sense, I pointed at key nuances in the 'fragile states' agenda, all of which underscore the looping or theory effect of numerical labelling,[10] that is, how prescription and description become one and the same.[11] I also sought to illustrate and emphasise the 'unresolvable contradiction' in symbolic power: '[R]esistance can be alienating; submission can be liberating.'[12] Sociologists of quantification and related practices also highlight this blurriness:

> We have observed several dances between classifier and classified, but have nowhere seen either unambiguous entities waiting to be classified or unified agencies seeking to classify them. The act of classification is of its nature infra-structural, which means to say that it is both organizational and informational, always embedded in practice.[13]

I discussed, for instance, how the more the g7+ manages to successfully identify itself *as a group*, the more expectations are generated that a *commonality* will play out in the form, for instance, of common indicators. These, in turn, contrary to the group's representatives' propositions, might encourage internal comparison and perhaps even an internal ranking. Hence, the more the group gains access to international tables, the more the g7+ is expected to act as a group, stepping over the particularities its representatives so vehemently emphasise. On the one

[9] Desrosières 1998, p. 236.
[10] Hacking 17 Aug 2006, March 2012; Bourdieu 2001a, p. 194.
[11] Bourdieu 2001a, part 2, ch. 3.
[12] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 24.
[13] Bowker and Star 2000, p. 320.

hand the grouping allows a distinction in relation to other groups – 'to exist socially is also to be noticed, in fact, to be noticed as distinct.'[14] On the other, it might erase distinction within, which is precisely what the g7+ has tried to avoid.

In addition, as the g7+ embraces quantification and classification, it is increasingly pushed to offer more and more indicators, mainly security-specific ones, and quantified systems of M&E. However, g7+'s representatives have so far resisted these moves, and indeed, they have often resorted to storytelling instead of numbers to depict their national problems. Yet, the pressures for numbers are mounting and the embracing of quantification threats to take a toll on this storytelling. Once a player, there is after all a pressure to play, and the g7+ is being taken on its practical disposition to quantify. The costs and the benefits of engagement are always relational, in that they cannot be considered in isolation.

One key and extremely subtle aspect of the symbolic power is precisely in the way even those perceived as most favoured by the classification of 'fragile states', that is, donors in general, are in fact also constantly struggling to keep its stakes in the game. One example is that, despite the hesitations towards common and security indicators and new M&E systems, the g7+'s representatives have used the platform created to request data services from diverse agencies, in order to provide the information ministries are still lacking. With that, as what I called 'unofficial' quantifying experts come to the fore, there is a competition for this provision, one which is currently much based on open data and free software. These are usually offered by major donor agencies, capable of executing massive data collection and compilation. Nevertheless, in the competition described, their roles are not guaranteed in the final use of this data and in the relations to be established with g7+ governments. As the pressure increases upon donor agencies' staff to acquire and improve statistical knowledge and as data sectors are increasingly involved in the development assistance to 'fragile states', quantifying experts become trapped into providing ever more data, to the point where *open data* risks becoming almost a minimum standard. Nonetheless, the more such data

[14] Bourdieu 1996, p. 112.

are produced, the least the roles of their producers is guaranteed in the game, adding more layers of nuances to the 'fragile states' agenda.

I suggested all these dynamics contribute to further reinforcing the grouping of the g7+, for good and for worse. In fact, I argued the more known and accepted the group is, the more antagonism it faces in major forums, such as the UN, and the more antagonism it faces, the more the g7+'s existence, platform and agenda are known and debated. Indeed, rivalries seem to have emerged inside the UN, where 'other developing countries', such as those in the g77, have suggested the g7+ is part of a donor-driven divide-and-conquer strategy and have denounced the self-labelling and self-measuring as proves of such attempt. Ironically, the label is not consensual at all in the g7+, and is actually at the centre of much internal negotiation.

It seems, however, that again, for good or for worse, the platform is now too much to lose and the costs of *re*-disengagement are even higher than the costs of disengagement first were. The more and the better the g7+ representatives play the game and gain access to international tables, the more internal and external dissidence the group faces and, at the same time, the more attached it is to the game. This reflects the embracing of a style of thinking & doing capable of self-authentication, that is, capable of matching methods and objects in ever-perfecting mutual composition. As the g7+ enters the game, struggling to define the contours of the changing common sense – in the identification, analysis and management of 'fragile states' – it engages in what Bourdieu calls heretic discourses. The g7+s attempts to shatter the existent common sense while at the same time preserving part of it, a part on which a reshaped common sense might actually build. These stances are balanced through constant work, in the practical evaluation of the costs of engagement and disengagement.

I suggested that by looking at the power in the 'fragile states' agenda as symbolic power, all these nuances come to the fore, taking into account the existence of the g7+, its self-labelling and self-measuring, the possibilities generated by its creation, the traps born out of the relations between the group's representatives and quantifying experts, and most importantly, the relational form which these nuances take. Not an

oppressor/oppressed divide; instead, a form of engagement that carries not only threats of inequality but also possibilities of change.

I concluded that at the heart of the constant internal and external dissidences the g7+ is facing is the rather exclusive hold the group's Finance Ministries have on the agenda. The group has not yet been able to engage other ministries, just as in general it also deals mostly with representatives from the Finance Ministries of donor countries. Ministries of Foreign Affairs, for instance, have been usually absent from most of the g7+'s activities. Thus, the main challenge the group faces, in terms of advancing its agenda further, is in the ability to engage with politicians. The 'unresolvable contradiction' of symbolic power is, by definition, not to be easily resolved by this move, but this move can give a positive (temporary) tilt in the balance of engagement and disengagement.

4.1. POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

I have showed how politicians in the g7+ and in donor countries have so far occupied different tiers in the game, largely detached from the quantifying and classifying practices and the debates around them. These practices are undoubtedly political, and this whole research was based on this understanding, but I suggest the also technical character of such practices has facilitated the (self-)alienation of politicians. Recommendations of quantifying experts are not necessarily absorbed and reports on ministerial meetings indicate decisions taken among mostly Finance and Development Assistance ministers are hardly ever translated into official procedures and rules in the respective competent decision-making bodies. Foreign Affairs offices and diplomats have no mandate to discuss the agenda on indicators in the UN, and Foreign Affairs in the g7+ member governments seem hesitant to counter regional institutions such as the African Union in order to use the 'fragile states' label.

Still, I argued that the alienation of politicians should not be interpreted as if quantifying and classifying practices have use only to the extent where they can serve decisions already made by politicians. This thesis sought to show exactly that numbers, methods and tools are not mere instruments in these dynamics but actually feed a style of thinking &

doing that responds to as much as it composes the world with which it is meant to engage. This point needs a back-and-forth illustration, which I offer below.

4.2. AGAINST CLEAR DIVIDES: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF A BLUR

Quantifying and classifying practices create a world that is measurable and manageable to its tiny details through provisional and imperfect correlations. To understand the impacts of such world-making in a way congruent with the approach adopted throughout this thesis implies a back-and-forth reasoning.

Certainly, as this thesis sought to show, these numbers have an important role in policy-making, able to guide poverty reduction, health and education priorities, and to stabilise finances. This was nowhere here denied. However, the quantifying and classifying reasoning in itself contributes to constructing a view of 'fragile states' that makes uncertain fixtures acceptable, that allows trial and error with human misery, that makes errors reasonable, that also depicts as reasonable the amount of investment in the development industry, that encourages constant monitoring and measuring of progress, and that subtly holds resources hostage to measured predictions that are only good enough. Going back again, however, the quantifying and classifying reasoning in their symbolic power, as opposed to an overt one, also often leaves arms unattended in the fluidity of statistical expertise, opening important and unique paths for 'fragile states' in the form of the self-labelling and self-measurement adopted by the g7+. To ignore these possibilities, the fact that the g7+ now has at least a seat at the table, is to dismiss altogether the possibilities of change that practically unfold in the 'fragile states' agenda, hence, to paradoxically eliminate these very possibilities. 'To change the world, one has to change the ways of making the world, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced.'[15] By embracing the label and the quantification, the g7+ has at least made a move towards having a say in the practical operations through which the world of its members are constantly constructed. Therefore, to

[15] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 137.

take quantification and classification as tools available for the utilitarian moves of (self-)alienated politicians is to ignore the important unique potential they offer for change.

5. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR RESEARCH

Two elements of the research were mentioned for the importance they have in the dynamics studied, but only further research can do justice to the role they can play in the 'fragile states' agenda. The very discussion on the (self-)alienation of politicians can be further explored in the context of the UN, where the antagonism between 'developing countries' can shed light on the different points-of-view of each actor, thus, providing insights into what kinds of challenges, for instance, the g7+ might face. Moreover, a study on the role of politicians in these dynamics can say much about the common argument that technicity evades politics. Important aspects of this discussion have been addressed in this thesis, and this divide has been essentially disputed, but much can still be said about the way politicians engage with the technical aspects of quantification and classification.

The second and crucial aspect to be explored in future research regards the role of storytelling as a capital for g7+ representatives, in terms of the unique access to local knowledge and local perceptions and the support a consideration of these factors might gain from local populations. As the g7+ embraces quantification, will it be able to hold to some of this storytelling? What value does storytelling have and might have? If storytelling loses even more ground, would country-specific experiences, so much valued by g7+ representatives so far, also be lost in favour of common indicators? In that case, would the group sustain itself?

Parallel to both debates is the future of discussions on the post-2015 agenda and the possible inclusion of security indicators. If security indicators, one of the priorities of the g7+, are indeed somehow included in the post-2015 agenda, it might give the g7+ prominence among 'developing countries' groups. It might also contribute to place the g7+ in a relatively interesting position when structural and procedural changes are effected in donor agencies in order to adapt to measuring and managing security progress in 'fragile states'. Furthermore, the context and characteristics of

the g7+'s engagement with quantifying experts so far may also shed light on the role security experts might have if security indicators become part of the post-2015 agenda.

This thesis opened space to explore these future developments by offering an account of the historical context in which the g7+ was born, the role of quantification and classification in the development sector, the symbolic power and the implications of these practices, and the way M&E practices have become adaptable and improved in use, providing authority to good enough data, methods and results. These historical and sociological foundations can contribute to understanding what possibilities and constraints an unresolvable contradictory engagement carries within.

6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

To look at the practices that classify 'fragile states' and their impacts in this thesis meant not to question the *reality* of 'state fragility' but rather to analyse what it takes for quantification and classification to represent anything and what they fail to show. That involved looking at how these practices become authoritative, how their authority is exerted and what this implies for the different actors involved.

Undoubtedly, as the many cases illustrated in this thesis sought to show, there is power in the way quantification and classification can impact assistance to 'fragile states', the political leverage of these governments within the country and in international forums. There is no denying the relation between 'fragile states' governments and donors is a fundamentally unequal and asymmetric one. Notwithstanding these impacts, however, it is also clear quantifying and classifying practices have merits in organising priorities, allocating resources accordingly and monitoring the efficient use of these resources. The question I faced was then how to combine these understandings in order to take into account the existence of the g7+ and its self-labelling and self-measuring, without assuming what these entailed, and also considering the powerful inequalities within these dynamics? The highly bureaucratic and often damaging quantification and labelling by donors is an easy target for criticism and rightly so, but what to say of the relevant critiques politically sceptics make to the power relations in this

agenda when they seem oblivious to both the practical pressures to engage and the nuances in this engagement? This research took issues with the silencing of these studies to the engagement taking place through the g7+, but most importantly and generally, it criticised the approach to power such analyses convey.

Attached to homogenised collective intentions that rely on the researcher's own deductions, political scepticism assumes a one history, one power narrative that is paradoxically detrimental to its very purpose to 'uncover' the violent ways through which postcolonial countries are constructed and managed. It fails to analyse, for instance, the unique impacts of an increasingly adopted but essentially mutant statistical reasoning that is a) based on historical and deep-seated epistemological, ethical, logical and philosophical successes, b) currently evolves in quick and constant adaptation to changes in software, techniques and other resources, and c) also travels at incredible speed and diffusely, making the attribution of authorship, at minimum, a fruitless exercise. These considerations contribute to opening space for change in three main ways.

First, while political scepticism points at the classification of 'fragile states' as an imposition of a Western standard of statehood, it fails to analyse the important ways in which the metaphysics of correlation, deeply embedded in current statistical reasoning, actually encourages a niche standardisation[16] that flexibilises this broader standard, effectively creating new ones to every new (numerical) sub-category of 'state fragility'. This is not to say that the general Western-inspired takes on different aspects of governance is not practically imposed to the governments of 'fragile states', but that the degrees of 'efficiency' with which this importation takes place and is accepted to take place are as impactful as the broader exported Western notion of statehood. The approach taken in this research importantly incorporates these debates.

Second, this research avoids a paradoxical silence on the many elements that can subtly but effectively lessen the asymmetry in these relations of power.

> ….strategies designed to establish or maintain lasting relations of personal dependence are, as we have seen, extremely costly, with the result that

[16] Epstein 2007, ch. 7.

> the means eat up the end and the actions necessary to ensure the continuation of power themselves help to weaken it.[17]

The indirect influence in the notion of symbolic power opens space to consider the ways in which the resource-wise privileged position of donors incurs in important costs. Absent or unacceptable forms of domination are, in symbolic power, replaced by subtle forms of indirect influence, which by nature requires that privileged actors pay a 'personal price'.[18] In the specific style of thinking & doing addressed here, the authority of quantifying and classifying practices needs to be constantly reasserted, since institutional and direct impositions are generally ruled out. The open-end of this authority, thus, leaves space for competition, and the final influence of quantifying experts is less guaranteed. Meanwhile, these experts face constant pressures in donor agencies to expand their expertise, caught in traps of effectiveness that are also influenced by the demand of officers from 'fragile states' themselves, as *users*. Therefore, the analysis of such traps can be central to understanding the possibilities for change existent in the game.

Third and lastly, an account of the context in which the complicity of 'fragile states' with quantifying and classifying practices was born and is developing is crucial to understanding what possibilities these practices generate. As widespread practices in the policy-making towards 'fragile states', they are better scrutinised than dismissed with 'sweeping generalities',[19] on the account of a homogenised collective intention that is supposed to dominate all engagements with postcolonial countries. Historical direct resistance to direct influence or oppression has usually been marked by new labels and new categories – non-aligned, Afro-American, homosexuali*ty*[20]. I suggest the adoption of the 'fragile state' label, whose definition is barely modified by the g7+,[21] does not represent *submission*, that is, it does not discard resistance. Rather, it reflects the subtle form of power in the game, whereby the label is perhaps less

[17] Bourdieu 1990b, p. 131.
[18] Ibid., p. 129
[19] Hacking 2012, p. 608
[20] As opposed to homosexuali*sm*.
[21] As would have been the case, for instance, of the 'black is beautiful' movement (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b, p. 23). No argument is made as to 'state fragility' being any positive in itself. Even a sense of pride in being 'resilient' that some could expect to be part of this discourse is not really present.

relevant and it is more important instead that the practices through which it is constructed are somewhat appropriated – because, first and foremost, perhaps contrary to arms of direct influence, these practices can be appropriated at all. To ignore these practices, thus, is to ignore a world of nuances and possibilities.

ANNEX 1: TABLE OF INTERVIEWS AND MEETINGS

INTERVIEWS/MEETINGS				
Date	*Place/via*	*Name*	*Org.*	*Position*
08/03/2013	Skype, from Sydney	Stephen Close	WB	Human Development Specialist, International Trade and Development (WB); experience with Education Sector Policy; based in Sydney; task team leader for Education projects in Timor-Leste.
06/04/2013	San Francisco	Christian Lotz	UNDP	Peacebuilding Specialist.
08/04/2013	WB, Washington	Gary Milante	WB	Senior economist, director of the Center for Conflict, Security and Development; worked in the WDR11. His stated interests are in applied game theory and modelling the political economy of peaceful compromise. He has conducted research in Sudan. Milante has taught the World Bank's core course on fragility and conflict for internal and external audiences and leads the 'Carana' post-conflict recovery simulation exercise for the course.
08/04/2013	WB, Washington	Nuno Mota Pinto	WB	Alternate Executive Director Representative for Albania, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, and Timor-Leste. Previously: Interamerican Development Bank.
09/04/2013	WB, Washington	Neil Fantom	WB	Manager, leads the World Bank's Open Data initiative, oversees World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance and the compilation and dissemination of the associated datasets. Worked in initiatives to help 'developing countries' improve statistical capacity, working in Malawi and Botswana for eight years. Prior: worked for DFID and the Statistical Office of the European Commission. Studied statistics and mathematics.
09/04/2013	WB, Washington	Anonymous 1	WB	Senior Public Sector Specialist, East Asia and Pacific, worked in Poverty Reduction Strategies, worked in Timor-Leste.
10/04/2013	WB, Washington	Wolfgang Pohl	WB	Environment Specialist, works in the CCSD, in the Implementation Team.
10/04/2013	WB, Washington	Ozong Agborsangaya-Fiteu	WB	Senior Operations Officer, works now in the CCSD, worked for the Fragile States Unit previously and in the WBI, providing direct assistance to the g7+.
10/04/2013	WB, Washington	Malcolm Ehrenpreis	WB	Task team leader in Timor-Leste in 2000, Gender Specialist. He arrived just after the referendum in the country with the first team of the World Bank.
11/04/2013	WB, Washington	Jo Kelcey	WB	Former Education Specialist at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington.
11/04/2013	WB, Washington	Khadija Shaik	WB	Junior Professional Associate, works in the CCSD and is the person in charge of calculating the PCPI and monitoring countries that do not make the list but are 'of concern'.
12/04/2013	WB, Washington	Rui Coutinho	WB	Senior Economic Policy Adviser, responsible for coordinating the CPIA.
12/03/2004	WB, Washington	Epifânio Martins	Timor	Timorese government, Economics and Development Directorate, Economist (received training at the World Bank).
19/04/2013	Skype, from Sydney	Leigh Mitchell	WB	Team member in Timor, working inside Timorese government on aid effectiveness.
16/05/2013	Skype, New York	Ian Martin	UN	Human Rights adviser, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the East Timor Popular Consultation.
06/06/2013	OECD, Paris	Vanessa Wyeth	OECD	Peace and Conflict Adviser in OECD, now ahead of INCAF. Previously: International Peace Institute.
06/06/2013	OECD, Paris	Erwin van Veen	OECD	Occupied the position now occupied by Vanessa Wyeth.
06/06/2013	OECD, Paris	Donata Garrasi	OECD	Conflict and governance expert at OECD, previous coordinator of the International Dialogue on Pecabeuilding and Statebuilding.
06/06/2013	OECD, Paris	Mbairo Mbaiguedem	Chad	Deputy Director-general for International Cooperation - Ministry of Planning, Economy and International

				Cooperation, focal point for g7+ in Chad.
06/06/2013	OECD, Paris	Anonymous commentator	USAID	Comments made in the context of the INCAF meeting (below).
20/06/2013	Phone, Paris	Jolanda Profos	OECD	Policy Analyst in OECD-DAC, in Peace, Security and Development Team, she manages the yearly report on financial assistance to 'fragile states'.
08/07/2013	Phone, London	Claire Leigh	ODI	Head of International Partnerships in Budget Strengthening Initiative, leads ODI's support to g7+
17/07/2013	Phone, New York	Sarah Cliffe	UN	Former chief of mission for the World Bank`s programme in Timor-Leste, 1999-2002; led the Bank`s Fragile and Conflict-Affected States Unit, 2002-2007; Bank`s director for East Asia and Pacific, 2007-2009; was special representative and director for WDR; now Special Adviser and Assistant Secretary-General of Civilian Capacities in UN.
23/08/2013	Phone, Nairobi	Betty Maina	WB	World Bank`s former focal point for the g7+ in Nairobi.
06/09/2013	Phone, Sydney	Anonymous 2	AusAID	Fragility and Conflict Branch, Humanitarian and Stabilisation Division, AusAID; part of the working group for the g7+' s Fragility Assessment.
24/10/2013	UNGA, New York	Felícia Carvalho	g7+	Programme and Coordination Officer, g7+.
24/10/2013	UNGA, New York	Habib Mayar	g7+	Senior Policy Specialist, g7+.
25/10/2013	UNGA, New York	Emília Pires	Timor	Minister of Finance, Timor-Leste; previous chair of the g7+.
13/10/2013	London	Paul Okamu	ACP	Head of the African Civil Platform, present in the main ministerial meetings at OECD, also present at the parallel meeting organised by the g7+ during the 2013 UN General Assembly.
MEETINGS				
5/06/2013 to 6/06/2013	Paris	Fifth INCAF Director-Level Meeting	OECD	The main topics discussed involved how donors were supporting the g7+'s initiatives, the evolution of the New Deal working groups and the g7+'s own requests. I attended as observer. Anonymity is protected by Chatham House Rules.
23/09/2013	New York	High-Level Ministerial Meeting: 'Putting Peace at the Heart of Sustainable Development'	UN General Assembly	The meeting was organised by the g7+ and attended by senior professionals from development agencies, such as USAID, UN and the World Bank, representatives of donor governments (mostly, as far as I could tell, from Finance or Development Assistance Ministries), and representatives from civil society. I attended as observer. Anonymity is protected by Chatham House Rules.

ANNEX 2: CPIA CLUSTERS AND GUIDELINES FOR SCORES ATTRIBUTED BY STAFF

CPIA CRITERIA	
A.	**Economic Management**
1.	Monetary and Exchange Rate Policies
2.	Fiscal Policy
3.	Debt Policy and Management
B.	**Structural Policies**
4.	Trade
5.	Financial Sector
6.	Business Regulatory Environment
C.	**Policies for Social Inclusion/Equity**
7.	Gender Equality
8.	Equity of Public Resource Use
9.	Building Human Resources
10.	Social Protection and Labor
11.	Policies and Institutions for Environmental Sustainability
D.	**Public Sector Management and Institutions**
12.	Property Rights and Rule-based Governance
13.	Quality of Budgetary and Financial Management
14.	Efficiency of Revenue Mobilization
15.	Quality of Public Administration
16.	Transparency, Accountability, and Corruption in the Public Sector

Following the example provided most often in this research, the explanation below is on the Education sub-component. It shows the details of the rating process in terms of the guideposts distributed to staff.

> The breadth and quality of a country's human capital is a key determinant of its economic growth and social development, including global attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), over half of which relate to Human Development (HD) outcomes. This criterion assesses the national policies and public and private sector service delivery that affect access to and quality of: (a) health and nutrition services, including population and reproductive health, (b) education, ECD, training and literacy programs, and (c) prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria 12…Each of these three major areas of human development should be rated separately on the scale from 1-6 outlined in the attached Box [see below].[1]

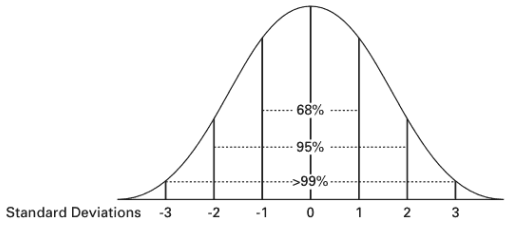
In the table below, I organise and reproduce the individual guideposts corresponding to each rating (1 to 6) in the Education sector.

[1] World Bank 10 September 2009, pp. 23-26.

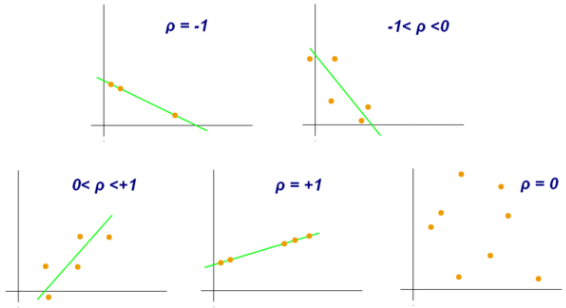
CPIA - GUIDEPOSTS FOR RATING[2]	
Component 9 - Building Human Resources	
Sub-component: EDUCATION	
1	Policies, spending, and effectiveness are nonexistent or grossly inadequate to assure literacy, universal access to basic education, equitable access to ECD services, and adequate post-basic education and training; teacher and student learning standards are nonexistent or grossly inadequate.
2	Policies, spending and effectiveness are inadequate to achieve universal basic education, literacy, or equitable ECD access; teacher and student learning standards are low; policies for post-basic education and training are inappropriate and/or poorly implemented.
3	Policies, spending and effectiveness are adequate to achieve progress towards universal basic education, literacy, and equitable ECD access; standards for teacher preparation, student learning, and oversight of private/NGO providers exist, but lack key elements or implementation is weak; policies for post-basic education and training exist but are inadequate in some areas or ineffectively implemented.
4	Policies, spending and effectiveness are generally appropriate for sustained progress towards universal basic education, literacy, and more equitable access to reasonable quality ECD services, although there may be gaps or inconsistencies; standards for teacher preparation, student learning, and oversight of private/NGO providers are largely appropriate, although implementation may be incomplete; policies in place for post-basic education and training are appropriate for sustained progress on quality, equity of access, and the efficiency of resource use.
5	Policies, spending and effectiveness are appropriate for achieving universal basic education of reasonable quality, universal literacy, and equitable access to reasonable quality ECD services; standards for teacher preparation, student learning, and oversight of private/NGO providers are appropriate; system performance and student learning outcomes are tracked, and increasingly used to guide policy; policies for post-basic education and training services are appropriate, and quality, equity of access, and efficiency of resource use are good
6	Strategic national education policies, high standards, and effective use of public and private resources support a good quality, universal basic education system, good quality, equitable ECD services, and diversified, good quality post-basic education and training systems adequate to support economic development and life-long learning; government oversight of private/NGO providers is effective; school performance and student learning outcomes are systematically tracked, with feedback to schools and parents; performance data and evaluation guide policy; at all levels of education, equity of access is protected and efficiency of resource use is high.

[2] Ibid. The guideposts were taken from the longer list, which includes Health and Prevention of HIV.

ANNEX 3: STATISTICAL METHODS

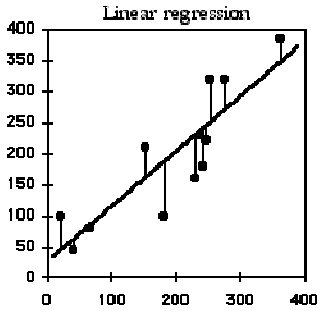


The curve of errors, bell-shaped curve or Gaussian curve of normal distribution.



Examples with different values of correlation coefficient.

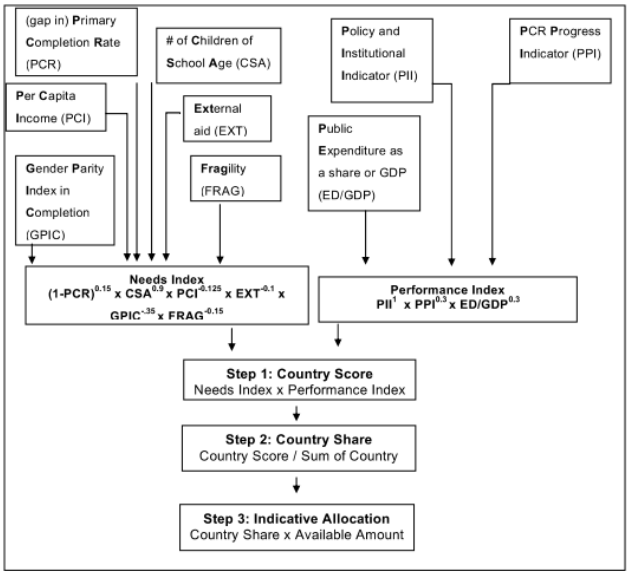
Correlation shows how related two variables are; regression points at what that relationship is. Regression is an attempt to 'model' the relationship.



The model's error is represented by the vertical distance to the line. The better the model, the smaller these errors will be. The linear regression model is a linear relationship between two variables. It is linear, and therefore, shown as a straight line. This is known as the 'best fit' line through the data, that is, the line that minimises the sum of the squared vertical distances of each point from the line.[1]

[1] Explanations reproduced from the course 'Introduction to Statistics', administered by Derek Cooper, King's College London, Jan 2013.

ANNEX 4: GPE ALLOCATION



Method for determining allocation of a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund, as exemplified in the research by the case of Timor-Leste.[1]

[1] See Global Partnership for Education January 2012.

ANNEX 5: NEW DEAL WORKING GROUPS

The table below was provided by the newly established New Deal Helpdesk (NewDeal.helpdesk@pbsbdialogue.org.)

Co-Chairs of the International Dialogue	
1	g7+ Co-Chair of the International Dialogue – **Sierra Leone**
1	Development partner Co-Chair of the International Dialogue - **Finland**
Members of the Steering Group	
1	Co-Chair of the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF)
1	Chair of the g7+ or member of the g7+ quintet
6	Representatives from the g7+ pilot countries: **Afghanistan, Central African Republic, democratic republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan**
6	Representatives from development partners**: Australia, European Union, France, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States**
2	Representatives of civil society (South and North) - Pregesco (DRC), Cordaid (Netherlands)
1	Representative of the United Nations: **PBSO/UNDP**
1	Representative of the multilateral development banks - **World Bank**
Observers to the Steering Group (to be decided on a case-by-case basis)	
1	Rotating seat for representative from development partners
1	Rotating seat for representative from g7+/recipients of development co-operation
2	Flexible seats for other stakeholders (e.g. private sector, non g7+ members, PBC Chair) by invitation of the International Dialogue Co-Chairs

The Working Group consists of:

ID Secretariat	ID Sec
ID Secretariat	ID Sec
ID Secretariat	OECD
ID Secretariat	New Deal Help Desk
ID Secretariat	ID Sec
OECD	OECD
Observer	Finn Church Aid
Observer	International Labor Organization (ILO)
g7+	Central African Republic
g7+	Central African Republic
g7+	g7+ Secretariat
g7+	g7+ Secretariat
g7+	g7+ Secretariat

g7+	g7+ Secretariat
g7+	Liberia
g7+	ODI supporting g7+
g7+	ODI
g7+	Timor-Leste
g7+	Timor-Leste
g7+	Togo
g7+	Togo
CSO	SLANGO, Sierra Leone
CSO	Interpeace, USA
CSO	Civil Society Core Team on the Peacebuilding & Statebuilding/ AGENDA, Liberia
CSO	Cordaid, The Netherlands
INCAF	Canada
INCAF	Denmark
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Finland
INCAF	Germany
INCAF	Germany
INCAF	Netherlands
INCAF	Sweden
INCAF	Switzerland
INCAF	UK
INCAF	US
INCAF	EU
INCAF	UNDP
INCAF	UNDP
INCAF	World Bank (Sierra Leone office)
INCAF	World Bank
INCAF	World Bank
INCAF	World Bank
EXPERT	ECDPM

ANNEX 6: DIMENSIONS OF THE PSGS: EXAMPLES FROM THE G7+'S 'MENU OF INDICATORS'

PSG Security	Security conditions	Perception of security conditions / % of public perception (disaggregated by gender) who feel safe
		Violent deaths per 100,000 population
		Major and minor assaults per 100,000 population
		Number of civilian deaths post war.
		% of crime rate; (rape, murder, armed robbery, drug related offences)
		Number of cases of sexual violence. / # of rape cases reported
		Number of urban/peri-urban criminal offences committed.
		Incidents of religious based violence
		Number of active militias identified in the country.
		Number of armed conflicts recorded during the year.
		# of cross border security incidents
		Number of cross-border raids recorded.
		Number of cases (illegal trafficking and violence) occur in the border
		# of security incidents at country level addressed by police officers at the regional level
		Number of internally displaced people.
		Number of strike actions recorded.
		Number of deaths during public demonstrations.
		Number of communal conflicts.
		Number of land disputes.
		Number of conflicts linked to the illegal exploitation of resources.
		Quality of relations between civilians and the police/military. (target)
		Level of police harassment. (target)
		Number of complaints brought against the army or the police.
		Number of people suffering harassment at borders.
	Capacity and accountability of security sector institutions	Security Service budget as a % of total budget / Share (%) of the budget allocated to the army, the police and the intelligence services.
		Existence of a reference framework for the implementation of reforms in the police and judicial systems.
		Number of pieces of legislation enacted in the security sector.
		Number of measures taken to enforce passed laws.
		Existence and implementation of strategic plans for the security sector, and regular monitoring of good execution (target)
		Existence of a human resource management policy for the security sector / existence of training and career development programmes for security Personnel
		Number of measures taken for youth supervision.
		# of security institutions adhering to budgetary and procurement standards / number of acquisitions of equipment according to procedures;
		No of audited annual accounts received of CSOs and NGOs
		Ratio of security personnel to population
		Number of police officers per administrative divisions.
		Number of police with tertiary education as of total national police
		Number of training schools;
		Number of trained officers and number of retrained people
		# of institutions and personnel trained to achieve full territorial coverage (disaggregated by institution and sex)
		Number of graduates recruited (quality of recruitment in the army).
		Reduced prison overcrowding: Level of prison population, and number of prisons built;
		Functioning sufficient equipment (transport and radio) by district / presence of inventory list
		Existence of an instrument to receive, monitor and investigate complaints of security sector misconduct (target)
		Criteria for vetting security personnel well documented and publicly available
		Number of cases brought to court
		Number of misconduct cases involving security personnel resulting in administration sanction and / or prosecution through the courts
	Performance of security sector institutions	Number of pieces of legislation enacted in the security sector.
		Number of measures taken to enforce enacted laws.
		Number of laws made widely available. / number of awareness raising events held on legislation in the security sector.
		% of Population Confident in Security Personnel delivering national security
		% change in public perception of confidence in security sector
		Perception of corruption of security forces / % of public perception of possibility to bribe security officers
		% of public who have access to security services
		Proportion of interventions on received calls.
		Number of regulated public demonstrations taking place without any major incident.
		Level of cross-border cooperation in the security sector.
		Number of traffickers/smugglers arrested.
		Number of marked/seized weapons.
		Number of registered small arms in the hands of the public
		Number of border services delivered
		Number of refugees identified.
		Number of reintegrated IDPs
		Number of ex-combatants and reintegrated ex-combatants

The explanation attached:

> The following table represents a compilation of the indicators that were identified by the five pilot countries. This Menu of Indicators provide countries an opportunity to identify those indicators that could be of use in while conducting their fragility assessment fragility spectrum, and serve as a source of inspiration for putting together their own country-specific

basket of indicators. The following indicators are expected to serve as a reference point, rather than being a prescription on which indicators should be used by countries for their fragility assessments. The indicators presented below stem from the fragility assessments from the five pilot countries. Some minor reordering has taken place, and duplications removed. At the time of publishing of this document, some countries have not yet validated their indicators, and for this reason the countries from which these indicators were formulated are not mentioned. Not all indicators presented here will indeed be measured by these countries, as country-specific baskets of indicators still need to be made in most of these countries. Over time, more and more countries will start to use (some of these) indicators to monitor progress on the Peacebuildling and Statebuilding Goals. As more countries conduct their fragility assessments and develop other indicators, this menu will continue to grow. This menu therefore needs to be seen as a work in progress. Please note that some descriptions below are not yet presented as 'indicators', but rather as 'target areas' that would still require further work to be developed into indicators that are measurable. The most obvious ones are followed with the word (target) in brackets, but many others will also require further technical work before they become fully measurable. This type of technical work will need to be done at country-level, in close collaboration with the statistical offices on the ground.[1]

[1] g7+ 2013, pp. 26, 29-32.

ANNEX 7: THE IDEAL ADVISOR

Characteristics of the Ideal Adviser

The ideal adviser **should**:	The ideal adviser **should not**:
Technical Skills and Ability (Skills and Knowledge)	
• Have the capacity to assist and support the development of useful procedures within the unit	• Be technically incompetent or lack the appropriate technical skills, credentials, and expertise for the job • Lack specific professional experience in the area in which they are advising
Methodology (Systems and Processes)	
• Use a cooperative approach when working with Timorese counterparts and staff. • Try to transfer knowledge to staff. • Adapt appropriately to the working environment, including finding solutions to any language barriers that exist. • Have and follow a well-defined work plan that supports the work program of the unit/agency and counterpart staff. • Maintain good relationships with all members of the team. • Be flexible and responsive to the needs of the job and the situation. • Share information.	• Intervene when it is not necessary for work objectives to be achieved. • Favor an individual approach over a cooperative approach. • Follow or complete their own work plan. • Participate in official meetings or represent the department/agency/ministry without previous approval from a senior Timorese manager. • Make decisions without consultation with counterparts.
Personal Attributes (Attitudes and Behaviors)	
• Be transparent and foster a sense of trust. • Be honest and open. • Be disciplined. • Adapt appropriately to the working environment and the Timorese culture. • Be committed to supporting national staff to achieve outcomes/objectives of the department and ministry.	• Be undisciplined or lazy. • Put private interests ahead of national interests. • Be egotistical. • Have a colonial or patronizing attitude. • Present an attitude that demonstrates a lack of trust. • Behave in an authoritarian manner.

This was proposed in the context of a project that was to be implemented by the World Bank in Timor-Leste, specific to the Minister of Finance.[1]

[1] World Bank 2006b, p. 12.

ANNEX 8: GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

BIG DATA: 'High dimensional data [big data] occurs when both "n" (sample size) as well as "p" (the number of available variables) are large.' Ironically, the current race for methods involves reducing these dimensions: 'The key objective of the empirical methods [towards big data] is to reduce this large dimension to a manageable set of variables (or what is referred to as 'dimension reduction')…Prediction inference meets causal inference: both inferences share a common goal, reducing the dimensionality of high dimensional data to a manageable subset of variables with the objectives of 1) relating it to structural parameters of interest (causal inference) 2) making predictions (prediction inference).' The resultant expectation: 'With a large set of variables from different data sources, you generate lots of correlations. Some of these correlations might be the key to the missing key variables in a given context that small RCT studies with a limited number of controls might not provide (read omitted variable bias).'[1]

EVALUATION: The OECD defines *evaluation* as '[t]he systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability'. It adds that '[a]n evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or program.' And it concludes with a note: 'Evaluation in some instances involves the definition of appropriate standards, the examination of performance against those standards, an assessment of actual and expected results and the identification of relevant lessons.'[2]

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY: The World Bank defines a household survey as 'any survey that is administered at the household level. It collects information about the household and the individuals living in those households.'[3]

MONITORING: The OECD defines *monitoring* as '[a] continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds'.[4]

OPEN DATA: Data 'available in a machine-readable standard format, which means it can be retrieved and meaningfully processed by a computer application', and 'explicitly licensed in a way that permits commercial and non-commercial use and re-use without restrictions.'[5]

OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE: A document prepared for the World Bank describes open source software as those whose code 'was made available to all' and for which 'any user could offer modifications and enrichments to any part of such code'. This is to be differentiated, therefore, from free software.[6]

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[1] See Galasso 22 April 2014. See also Lal Das 13 March 2014, Taylor, Schroeder et al. 2014.
[2] Ibid., pp. 21, 22. See also World Bank 2013, p. 10
[3] World Bank, 'Household Surveys Clinic'.
[4] OECD 2002, pp. 27, 28. See also World Bank 2013, p. 10.
[5] World Bank, 'Open Data Essentials'.
[6] Dravis 2004, p. 2.

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